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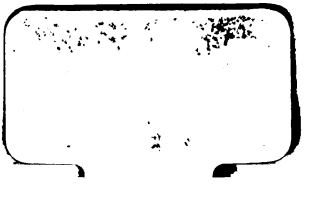

Charles Thornton

# MEMOIR

OF THE

# REV. SPENCER THORNTON, A.M.

LATE VICAR OF WENDOVER, BUCKS.

BY

REV. W. R. FREMANTLE.

"O that I could get fairly into contact with the souls of my parishioners."

DR. CHALMERS' JOURNAL.

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# PREFACE.

THE sudden death of a devoted servant of Christ, cut off in the prime of life and in the midst of his usefulness, points with no common interest to the little space allotted for employing the talents committed to us by our absent Lord. But far deeper lessons lie beneath this acknowledged truth. The mystery of the Divine dispensations is not without its full interpretation; and the dark parable in which the Lord has spoken remains to be studied by those who know "that the end of the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." There is a voice from the inner temple which declares, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

If it be a hallowed service to ponder the death of a Saint, it is the more important to trace the issues of his heavenly life from their beginning to their ending, from the time when Christ was first known as a refuge unto the day of glory. And it is hoped that the following pages may present some profitable

subjects for meditation, and tend to enlarge our views of the goodness of God, whose judgments are unsearchable, and whose ways are past finding out.

The aim of the Editor has been to exhibit the work of grace in the subject of this Memoir; and at the risk of prolixity to give as many details as possible of the early dawn and progressive maturity of his religion, in order that the reader may form his own conclusions as to the reality of its principle and effects. For this reason, the correspondence of the schoolboy and the minute details of his ministry, both in private and public, have been inserted. And if any apology be required for the publication of apparently trivial events, it may be enough to call the attention of those who were not personally and intimately acquainted with Mr. Thornton to the fact, that he was eminently a man of detail, connecting every circumstance of daily life with eternity. He lived much in the presence of God, and therefore the commonest event was a reality. And they whose term of life has extended beyond thirty-six years, may discover in this the cause of that diligence and efficiency which marked the brief but useful career of this simple-hearted servant of God.

Few, if any Clergymen do good upon a large scale, who have not made themselves masters of the details of their work. Efficiency is not learned in the study. The knowledge of the human heart can only be acquired by personal intercourse and a very

close analysis of individual character. This wisdom is essential in winning souls to Christ. The social relation in which a Clergyman of the Church of England stands to his parishioners, renders this doubly necessary. For his solemn obligation is to minister the Word and Sacraments to his parishioners, each one of whom has a right in him. He is not appointed to make a selection for himself, or to adopt a selection made for him by those who gather round his ministry and form his congregation. His duties and responsibilities are co-extensive with the number of souls committed to his care. And whatever difficulties may lie in his way, he must not be satisfied with being known and acknowledged in public as the minister, until he has asserted in private his commission to each parishioner. If they are to know the pastor, the pastor must know the parishioners. The minister who acts upon this principle will not esteem the details of parochial work unimportant. There is an eternal interest at stake in every event, whether it affects the Squire, the rate-payer, the inmate of the workhouse, or of the infant school.

Under a very solemn conviction that this Memoir may throw light upon the immense amount of good which the parochial system of the Church of England may effect in the hands of men who are truly moved by the Holy Ghost, the Editor has ventured to print, at length, more of the documents which

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# MEMOIR.

## CHAPTER I.

Early History—Confirmation—Zeal—Conversation with Dr. Arnold—Letter to his Father—Letters from Rev. T. Page; Rev. A. Stanley; Dr. Vaughan—Dr. Arnold's Sermon and Letter—Letter from a Schoolfellow—Letters from Two Clergymen.

SPENCER THORNTON, second son of George Thornton, Esq., Marden Hill, Herts, was born in London, October 13, 1813.

He was sent to a private school at 12 years of age, and from thence to Rugby. He took his degree at Cambridge in 1836; and, after twelve years of ministerial labor in the parish of Wendover, Bucks, he died suddenly on January 12, 1850.

His short, but useful life may be divided into three nearly equal portions of twelve years. Of the first we have little or no record, beyond that which is common to children under the care of a pious parent. It was the seed time, during which those first principles were implanted, which produced, in due

season, in answer to the prayer of faith, the genuine fruits of piety. It appears that, until he went to school, he thought little upon the subject of religion; and has been heard to say, in reference to that period, that when his sister, who was a pious child, asked him to read a hymn or a text of Scripture, he would refuse, because he "disliked all that sort of thing." But the simple habit of obedience to his parents in which he had been trained, was an abiding principle, and attended with the most important results; for, when he was placed at school, he was not deterred, by the ridicule of the boys who slept in the same room with him, from reading every morning and night his prayers in a little book called "Daily Bread," given to him by his mother, and which he kept by his bedside,—a circumstance to which he often referred in after life.* That he had learned to take a lively interest in the performance of religious duties, was seen upon his return from school for his holydays at thirteen years of age. Upon the Sunday morning he would get up long before the family, to visit the cottages of the neighbouring poor, and would go from house to house exhorting young and old to put on their Sunday clothes and

* He highly valued this little book, and frequently gave it as a present to school-children and young persons preparing for confirmation.

prepare for church. He would then hasten home, and appear in his place at the family prayer.

He remained at his first school until 1828, when he was removed to Rugby.

His character, upon leaving school, is thus given by the son of his tutor, Mr. Elwell, in a letter to his mother.

"So uniform and steady was our dear friend's conduct while a pupil under our roof, that I cannot recal any one occasion which broke in upon a quiet, conscientious course of study and behaviour. There was nothing to be particularly marked in him, as his abilities were not above the average of boys of his standing; and in his recreations and amusements he ever had the good will of his fellows attending him. To his teachers, his manners were respectful and attentive; in this point he excelled. Your many kind and anxious letters of advice and direction he appeared always to value, and was anxious to shew by his behaviour how much he valued them."

But although the seed of grace was germinating, and giving its early evidence of life; yet, if we judge from Mr. Thornton's own convictions, and the testimony of those who knew him best, it did not develop and assume that distinctive form which marked his character through life, until his confirmation

at Rugby, in 1829. This was the sealing time of his faith and devotion to God. Up to this period, mixing in the ordinary occupations and amusements of the school, he seems to have kept very much within himself whatever of religious feeling he possessed; but from the day of his confirmation he regarded himself as one publicly and solemnly given to the service of God; he was no longer his own; and, in the ardour of a "first love," which never cooled, he laid upon the altar all that he had and all that he was,—a willing, lively, and reasonable sacrifice to God.

The preparation for his confirmation was undertaken by him in a spirit very different from that which usually prevails with boys at a public school. In letters written to his mother about this time, we find such expressions as the following:—

"I am preparing as diligently as I can for the solemn business of confirmation. I get up about six; on Sunday at the same time, as I do not like to waste my time in bed, when I remember,

"'This is the day when Christ arose,' &c.

I have received some dialogues about confirmation, and have bought a copy of Bickersteth for 6*d.* I have been to Mr. Moor twice, and am going to-night again, which will be, I think, the last time. The confirmation is on Saturday next. May our united

prayers prove advantageous. May the Lord send down on me the Holy Spirit."

We have the account of the confirmation in a letter to his mother.

"Rugby, June 20, 1829.

"I will tell you about the confirmation which took place this morning. It was given out by Dr. Arnold the service should be at 10 o'clock. We were in chapel by 10 o'clock; not only those about to be confirmed, but all the school. We waited till 20 minutes after 10, when Dr. Arnold sent the clerk to say that we might go out. The Bishop (Bishop Ryder) came at 20 minutes before 11, and the service began about 10 minutes before. Mr. Anstey read the preface to the Confirmation Service, which begins, 'To the end, &c.' Then those who were about to be confirmed were ordered by the Bishop to come and stand before the Communion Table. He then read the question 'Do ye, &c.?' We answered, 'I do.' I hope and trust I answered with a full determination to turn unto the Lord with my whole heart. Soon after, as many as could, knelt in front of the Communion Table. The Bishop then put his hands upon each in order, and pronounced the prayer, 'Defend, &c.' in an audible and distinct voice, from memory. After this was done, another party went to kneel, and again another, &c. I was in the last party but one. There were about 60 confirmed who

belong to the school. The Bishop then, from the pulpit, gave us a Charge. I wept much when I heard; it was very affecting. He began by saying: 'The ordinance of confirmation is now finished outwardly and in the sight of men. The minister, the candidates, and the Bishop have performed each his own part in the ceremony. But there is another part concerned in it. The Father, God Almighty, has now His part to perform, which (I think he said) is to answer our prayer, and to send the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, into our hearts.' He said: 'You must judge, yourselves, whether you are hearty believers in the Articles of our Church; whether you come to the ordinance with firm resolutions to serve God to the end of your life.' He said he would give us, 1st, a word of advice to be constant in private prayer, not minding the ridicule of others. Our prayers should always contain confession, supplication, and thanksgiving. 2ndly, a word of warning. 3rdly, of encouragement. You have (said he) many against you; but you have One for you, whom if you serve, you need not fear all others.

"Monday morning.—Dr. Arnold gave out in chapel yesterday, that he purposed to administer the Sacrament on Sunday next. I suppose, by what you say in one of your letters, that you wish me to receive the Sacrament. When recommending Bickersteth, you say that you wish me to read it

attentively before I approach the 'table of the Lord.' If you have now no objection to my receiving the Sacrament, I purpose to do so (by God's help), and shall read that, and also another book by Archdeacon Pott, to which are subjoined devotions before and after partaking of it. If you have any objection, please to write this week, so that I may know on Friday or Saturday. I keep a kind of diary, in which I note down my employment for every hour in the day, and also any errors or temptations into which I fall. I have liked the books which you have sent me. The text in 'Daily Bread' was very beautiful for the 20th, Saturday, 'Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established.' (2 Chron. xx. 20; and also Ps. cxxxviii. 3.) The Bishop mentioned in his address that 'the service of Christ was perfect freedom.' I thought that perhaps he himself had found it so, and had experienced it many years. He looked very unwell.—P.S. Mr. Moor advises me to partake of the Sacrament."

From this time he became a marked character in the school as a religious boy, visiting the poor in the town and neighbourhood of Rugby, distributing tracts, and labouring earnestly for the conversion of his school-fellows.

Some instances of his zeal are given in the following extracts from letters written at that period to his mother.

"Rugby, Nov. 18, 1829.

"I have now before me your two last letters, in which you have furnished me with abundant comfort. The paper of texts, and the hymn which you sent me, were very delightful. T—— is in my room. He has just read the hymn 'Ashamed of Jesus, &c.' and has expressed this wish, 'O that I had such letters as that!' 'O if I had a pious mother!'

"With regard to the tracts, I have some news. I distributed a few in some cottages at Bilston. Yesterday I saw Susan, and she said, 'We are indebted to some of your young men for distributing little papers in Bilston about the Sabbath.' I told her I did it. She said they had been of much use to her and to the rest....

"I have not been laughed at or ridiculed much. I attended the communion of the Lord's Supper last Sunday; which has, I trust, tended to the refreshing and strengthening of my soul.... Dr. Arnold seems desirous of doing good in every way. He has just set on foot a Dispensary, and has written a short pamphlet on the advantages of it, &c. I saw Mrs. Arnold in the town one morning, going to some cottages....

"I have heard that Dr. Arnold intends to stop the Sunday newspapers; so you see that your note has been in his mind."

Again:—"I am glad I went to see that poor man on Monday. He died yesterday. Another fatherless family—seven children. Ps. lxiii. 7; Ezek. xi. 19. I have commenced reading daily with another boy in this house, at his own request. Rom. viii. 28; 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23."

In a subsequent letter he writes:—

"I have had only two opportunities of walking with T——. I hope favourably of him; and He who hath begun a good work in him, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. I generally enjoy an hour in the morning every Sunday from 7 to 8."

The following year he writes, June 10, 1830:—"T—— does not go on very well. He seems to take but very little heed to my advice. O, the advantages of a pious mother! I don't think he enjoys that privilege. I am glad you are so much pleased with Mr. S. Wilberforce's preferment. The Lord doth indeed provide for His people. Dr. Arnold preached last Sunday morning on 1 Tim. iii. 16. It was a different sermon to what he generally preaches,—more like a lecture.

"There is to be a Bible Meeting here next Thursday, and the Rev. Andrew Brandram is going to

attend. Rom. viii. 26. Oh, that I may daily be growing in grace, that I may soon join with St. Paul. Rom. viii. 37."

Such faithful and practical love for souls was not likely to be unnoticed by the boys; and we find him referring to some reproach endured for Christ's sake.

"Rugby, Nov. 4, 1830.

"It is now known by the boys that I give tracts, &c. They do not laugh at me as much as I expected. But it does not affect me, blessed be God! O that I may never be ashamed of Christ, or of his doctrine, in this sinful generation. 'Greater is He that is in me, than he that is in the world.' 'Though an host of men encamp against me, yet in the Lord will I be confident.' Shall I not gladly suffer persecution for the cause of Christ? If Christ himself suffered so much for me, shall not I endure to bear afflictions? It is blessed to be enabled by faith (that faith which overcometh the world) to go forth without the camp, bearing his reproach. (Heb. xiii. 13.) I trust that you, my dear Mama, will not cease to ask for *me* at the throne of grace, that the Lord, whose I am, and whom I desire to serve, may make me bold in every good word and work.

"I am glad to hear that the Lord has in some degree comforted Mrs. Rose.

"I trust that the above comes from my heart, and God, who has given me boldness, will perfect the work which he hath begun in me."

We may here observe, that this early zeal in Spencer Thornton was not the result of any stimulating process in his education at home; nor was it a mere mechanical adoption of the language and habits of those older than himself; nor was it the fruit of constitutional taste and temper; but was manifestly the work of the Spirit of God in his soul, planting in him, as a great principle of action, the love of a crucified Saviour, and the love of souls for His sake.

It is well known to many Rugby boys, how early his influence for good began to be felt in the school. It was no love of display which led him on one occasion to remonstrate with an elder boy for swearing in his presence, for which he received a cuff, but to whom in return he gave a tract on swearing, which, although it may not have had the desired effect upon the offender, was at least not without permanent benefit to others, who were touched by this unusual example of courage and devotedness in so young a boy. One of his cotemporaries observes: "I have known boys check themselves when about to use bad words, if he was near; and we used to remark that when he played at football or cricket, there was a

great absence of swearing." In confirmation of this remark we may add, that upon a parent taking her sons to Rugby, and making some enquiry from the Master, under whose care she had placed them, as to the character of her relative Spencer Thornton, she received this reply: "Rugby School owes a great deal to Spencer Thornton, he has done so much in putting down swearing and bad conduct among the boys."

Whether the following extract from Dr. Arnold's Sermons has immediate reference to Spencer Thornton, there is no particular evidence to shew; but from expressions in letters at the time, it seems to have arisen out of the religious movement which was then going on, and in which Spencer Thornton took so prominent a part.

"You must know, and know practically, that it is an unchanging law of our condition, that difficulties and painfulnesses must beset the path of duty. You must not be always watched, nor always in the company of older persons, before whom you feel yourselves under restraint. In plain terms, it is good for you to know to a certain degree what it is to suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ. But while you are so far left alone, God forbid that we should stand by the while as neutral, watching with indifference the struggles of the better disposed

among you, and doing nothing to aid them in it. That indeed were a treason to our common Master, Christ: we could not be ourselves fighting heartily in His cause, if we cared not for the success or defeat of our fellow-soldiers. I use the term advisedly, for difference of age makes no difference in this. From the oldest to the youngest, all who are sincerely striving to follow Christ are truly fellow-soldiers to one another; nor do I know of any sight more beautiful, nor one which ought to be more kindling to us who are older, than to see a young man, *and still more to see a young boy, striving fearlessly in his Master's service, and shaming, by his courageous zeal, or perhaps more measured and colder efforts.* Surely we should spare no encouragement, no marks of visible sympathy—nay, of high respect and admiration—for one who is so nobly doing his duty; nor, on the other hand, should be slow in expressing our strong disgust at those who are labouring to turn him from the right way; nor in visiting their conduct with the heaviest punishment, as well as feeling towards their characters the utmost abhorrence and contempt, should they endeavour, by acts of direct violence and oppression, and by setting others against him, to make his trial here harder than it will be in after life—harder than his age can justly be expected to bear." (Sermons, vol. iii. p. 265.)

In a letter written to his mother, May 31, 1831, he says:—

"I am sure that you will be equally glad to hear as I am to state, that the Lord has graciously converted one of my school-fellows during this half-year. He attributes it in a great measure to reading the Bible, and also to the following circumstance. When he first came here in the winter, he was acquainted with a boy in the sixth form, who was very kind and attentive to him. His kindness appeared to grow colder daily, and the following rumour was spread about the school: that the new boy did not keep company with the other, because he did not think him fine enough in his dress. This was a false and scandalous report. And chiefly on this account, the new boy was disliked in the school. But observe how that sweet promise was brought about, 'My counsel shall stand.' When abandoned by the greatest part, he betook himself to think upon his God. He saw the insufficiency of all earthly friends. He has not yet been confirmed, but is desirous and longs to be. I hope the Lord will carry on the good work which he has thus begun.

"When I was at Mr. Caldicott's, he mentioned that a poor man, about two miles hence towards Dunchurch, was dangerously ill. I went to see him on Wednesday evening; but as the clergyman had

been, he was tired, and I therefore did not see him, but pointed out the latter part of Luke xv. to be read to him. I went again on Friday, when he was no more. He died that morning. I sat half an hour talking to his widow, who has four children. Her mother, I think a pious woman, is staying with her. The man, I fear, by all accounts, was a drinker and swearer. His time indeed was very short, for he kept his bed first on Sunday.

"Yesterday Dr. Arnold said to me, just after school, 'Thornton, have you seen the woman at the Turnpike to-day?' 'Yes, Sir.' 'And I should like to know, if you have no objection to tell me, who was with you?' 'The two Pyms, Sir.' 'O, then they were too young. I only wished to know if any boys went with you from the same motive as yourself.' He continued to say he had heard of me many times in that way, and hoped that I should persevere. That he wished 'there were many more of that spirit in the school.' He asked me if I knew what the woman intended to do; and he said that if at any time I should meet with any deserving objects, if I mentioned them to him he would gladly assist them. I mentioned a person to him whom I have seen twice at the Almshouses. He lamented that he did not know so much of the poor as he should like, on account of his many other duties....

"I don't know if I mentioned that a cheap reli-

gious book-shop has been established. The curate, Mr. Page, superintends it. I have bought 'Persuasions to Early Piety,' which I think of giving to Fred; (his brother, who died in 1835). Parcel's end was very sudden. I hope Kent may be truly taught of God."

The dutiful and affectionate respect which he entertained for his parents, and the simple but earnest manner in which he sought to make a sudden dispensation of Providence a source of spiritual blessing even to a father, is shewn in the following letter. It is found written upon ruled lines, and with unusual care.

"Rugby, April 9, 1831.

"My dear Papa,—After reading your Letter I could not but grieve for the calamity, as distressing to yourself and Mama; but the thought struck me immediately, that it was the work of the Lord. Therefore let us hush our repinings with the same sentiment that Eli expressed, 'It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good.' It was, no doubt, ordained by Him that your excellent friend should be stopped on his intended journey, and be laid on a bed of sickness in your house, which proved his death-bed. 'Therefore let us not sorrow as those that have no hope,' but rather be thankful that God has spared the *master* of the

house, and has not cut *him* off by an early death. The resignation of a believer is thus expressed: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' The intended effect of this solemn dispensation to yourself is, to wean you from time, and to set your face towards heaven. We naturally love the world, and the things of the world, and this love unsubdued is the sole cause of what are called mortifications and disappointments from the world. If the love of Christ prevailed more in us, it would not be in the power of outward things to give us as much pain as they do; or rather, if this love were perfect in us, we should be ashamed and sorry that these things should give us *any pain at all.* God has intended His providential works, however adverse or disagreeable to our sense, for some just purpose. There is a 'needs be' if we fall into divers temptations, and, if needful, then they are right and profitable, and will appear so at the last. As we observe in the work of a mason or stone-cutter, that he does not give the stone that he is framing *one* blow more than necessary, so the Lord does not lay upon us one affliction or distress more than He (not we) sees necessary. 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.' In this, and in the trial which he appointed four years ago,* the Lord calls

* The death of his only sister.

aloud to us all with a most solemn voice, 'Prepare to meet thy God;' 'Watch; for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh;' 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light;' 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon;' 'Behold, I come as a thief;' 'Blessed is he that watcheth;' 'If the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live thereby;' 'Seek ye the Lord *while He may be found*, call upon Him *while He is near*;' 'Seek FIRST the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.' In conclusion, then, we must pray to trust the wisdom and love of God in all sorrowful dispensations, since He does not willingly or wantonly afflict the children of men, or send one sorrow more than what is absolutely necessary to their true edification and welfare. When we can bear all trouble as a part of the burden of Christ, and can obtain his assistance to bear it with us, we shall find it daily grow lighter and lighter, till at length it will become upon us like the burden of wings to a bird, enabling us to fly the swifter and higher towards heaven. May God of his infinite mercy grant that

we may all 'hear the rod and who hath appointed it.' I hope, my dear Papa, this long letter on the same subject will not weary you."

His influence in the school seems to have been much felt at this time; for some important changes in the habits of the boys were, we believe, mainly owing to his example, approved and sanctioned as it universally was by his excellent master, Dr. Arnold. Traces of this will be seen in extracts from his letters to his mother.

"Rugby, Oct. 11, 1831.

"This is to me a solemn period. I am just about to enter my nineteenth year. O, how does each passing year remind me of the nearness of eternity! Look at hymns 41 and 42, book ii. in Olney. They are very suitable for me at this time. The desire of your heart, which you mention in your letter, is very spiritual. I hope it may be my happy experience. Thanks be to my gracious God for having snatched me from the dominion of Satan before he had grappled me still faster. Oh what an exceeding privilege *early* to be brought to see my state by nature and actual sin, and to be made to hear the gracious voice, 'Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the Guide of my youth.'"

"Nov. 16.—I read the 91st Psalm with some

young friends last Saturday, and enjoyed it very much."

"Rugby, May 17, 1832.

"I am glad you have sent G. P. "Bridges' Christian Ministry." I suppose you could not have chosen a better book. I shall hope to read it before long. It explains the real and immense importance attached to the ministry.

"I was very much struck to hear of J.'s death. I hope your two visits were blessed to him. I trust it may be a serious time to dear Fred, and may leave on his mind impressions never to be effaced. May I be enabled to unite my earnest prayers for his best interests.

"The two hymns on Prayer in the Olney Collection (hymn 60 and 61, book ii.), are very beautiful. I read them to-day to a very nice old woman whom Mrs. Harris recommended me to see. I have very often a rich income of Gospel privileges from having so many *real* friends in the town and neighbourhood. Mr. Page asked me and M—, (who is, I hope, really converted) to accompany him to Clifton on Tuesday evening, to hear Mr. Moor's lecture; his course is to go through the Bible, expounding as he goes. On Tuesday fortnight I heard him on Jer. i. 17 to end. He spoke beautifully on the words 'Gird up thy loins,' not only of the body but

also of the mind. 'These words,' he said, 'apply particularly to those who intend to enter the ministry.' When sitting under him, I was more impressed than ever before with the vast importance and responsibility of that duty. He said, too, what I was not aware of, that those words, 'Gird up,'* &c. are addressed to every clergyman when ordained. The portion last Tuesday was, chap. ii. 4—13. On ver. 13 he observed, that Great Britain is one of 'the Isles of Chittim,' and that, blessed be God, we have changed our gods from wood and stone to the true God. After this, was sung 'I thirst, but not as once I did;' a most beautiful hymn! I heard Mr. Moor again yesterday evening in this church on Isaiah li. 3. A beautiful text and sermon!

"We have another Lecture on the evening of Sunday, which was established before Easter. Each master addresses his own form on some points in religion. I hope it will be useful. Each master can adapt his matter to the understandings of the boys in the several forms. Our morning Service is at half-past ten; so we are able to hear the whole sermon in the parish church, except when the Sacrament is administered. I am very glad to say that *about twenty go every Sunday* and hear the Gospel preached; and we may trust it will not be without a

* See Gospel for Ord. Service, Luke xii. 35—38.

blessing. There were sixteen last night to hear Mr. Moor. Upon the whole, I have great cause to bless God, and to set up my Ebenezer, saying, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped me;' for there appears to be some revival of religion. M— was first awakened in the holydays. I see a good deal of him. There is one too in this house, who seems anxiously enquiring, 'What must I do to be saved?' He comes from Manchester. I hope, from what he says, that his mother is pious. She has long suffered from very indifferent health. I have lent him several sermons. Mr. Page was kind enough to lend me the Sermon he preached last Sunday evening. A third service has just been established, to continue through the summer....

"Our school bell has tolled this week for Dr. Arnold's infant. It died on Monday morning. Dr. Arnold was much alarmed for Mrs. Arnold on Sunday and Monday, the 6th and 7th. She was in great danger.... She is now gaining strength daily, and got up for the first time yesterday. Dr. Arnold went to Laleham yesterday, and took the little babe to be interred. He returned last night, and looks in better health than when he went. You may suppose he was much agitated and alarmed."

The custom of the boys attending the sermon in the parish church, referred to in the preceding letter,

is explained in the following letter, from the Rev. T. Page, to the Editor, dated March, 1850.

"You are aware that at Rugby the boys attend Divine worship in a chapel connected with the school, in which are two services on the Lord's Day, but only one sermon—in the afternoon; consequently it was easy for any one attending the morning chapel service to be in time for the sermon in the parish church. Soon after my entering upon the curacy of Rugby, now twenty years ago, I observed two or three of the boys regularly coming into church before the sermon. I was struck with the seriousness of their deportment, particularly of that of one of their number, with whom I took the earliest opportunity of becoming acquainted. It was Spencer Thornton; in whom I was rejoiced to find one who truly loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and was not ashamed to confess Him before men. He did indeed adorn his Christian profession; for by the sweetness of his disposition, his gentlemanly manners, and a conciliatory and affectionate bearing, he won the good opinion and sincere regard of a large number of his cotemporaries; while his singularly straightforward and consistent course, his fearless and unflinching fidelity to his Lord and Saviour, made him an object of esteem even among those who ridiculed the strictness of his principles, and

the piety of his walk and conversation. So great was the influence which he obtained over his associates, that not a few of them seemed to imbibe his own spirit, and with him to choose the good path, which, when really chosen, 'shall not be taken away.' I have seen as many as 30 of the boys come into church after their own Service at the school chapel was concluded, and always under the leadership of Thornton. Several, who outstripped him in intellectual and scholastic acquirements, and some who have since attained to great eminence, were among those who looked up to Thornton as their counsellor and friend; and with singular judgment did he ever use the happy influence he had gained over them. Always cheerful, always ready to enter into the recreations and pastimes of boyhood, and at the same time always bearing in mind the obligations and responsibilities of his Christian profession, he did much to convince those who witnessed his daily life, that religion, if it be a serious, is not a morose or unsocial, thing; and that while it prepares us for the world to come, it does not throw a gloomy shadow over existence in the world that now is. He was in the constant habit of introducing to me any whom he thought my advice, as a Christian minister, might strengthen in their religious impressions and resolutions. By this means

I became acquainted with several whom I still regard with affection. One Sunday morning Dr. Arnold happened to be at the parish church, and as at the usual time there was a little stir by the entrance of the boys, I was rather anxious as to what he might say respecting it. However, at the conclusion of the service, he expressed himself much gratified that so many of the boys manifested such interest on the subject of religion; and on this (if I remember rightly), as well as on other occasions, he spoke of Spencer Thornton in terms of the truest regard and respect, and as a blessing to the school. Indeed, on our dear friend leaving the school, Dr. Arnold made him a present of books, in testimony of the importance he attached to the religious influence he had exercised while at Rugby."

The consistent manner in which he pursued his object, may be seen from the following extracts. In a letter to his mother he says:—

"Rugby, Feb. 23, 1832.

"I hope frequently to attend the prayers at the church on Friday mornings at 11, and when the evenings are longer we shall hope to attend the full service on Wednesday evening. Among my poorer brethren in this neighbourhood, is a man who is a basket-maker by trade. He lives in the parish of

Dunchurch, and conducts an Evening meeting at his house on Sunday and Wednesday. W— has been here to-day, and his sister. They have lately received Hawker's New Testament, which they value exceedingly. They remark that he is so full of love to his Saviour. They also value what they have seen of Mr. Bickersteth's writings."

Speaking of the boys, he says:—

"They are much quieter, and we go on very peaceably. I think I may consider it an answer to prayer. What an encouragement to persevere!"

An extract from a letter from the Rev. Arthur Stanley, will show the opinion formed of Mr. Thornton by his cotemporaries at Rugby.

"We all had the impression how highly he was valued by Dr. Arnold, as is proved by our all at once understanding the allusion in that sermon* at the time of its delivery. One of his school-fellows and cotemporaries was mentioning the other day how remarkable he was for his knowledge of the Bible. So much so, that whenever any difficulty arose in the 6th-form Lessons, about a quotation which the rest of the boys did not know, the question was always referred to him—'Thornton, you

* See page 31.

know; tell them what it is.' He certainly left a very strong impression on the boys, of his religious goodness, to a degree beyond any other instance of a similar kind that I can recollect. And in one respect I think it was the more remarkable, from its being united with a very strong sense of the severer social duties of a 'Præpostor,' as they are described in Dr. A.'s life. His influence may have been injured by occasional acts which the boys may have thought eccentric, but it never, as far as my recollection goes, was injured by any thing like softness or weakness. He was always straightforward, manly, and upright; and this no doubt contributed much to the confidence placed in his great excellence. He had at that time, as I suppose he had afterwards, some strong opinions differing from those of his Master, and from many of those with whom he was brought into contact, and who shared, as far as they were capable, their Master's esteem for him. But I do not think that this ever interfered with his cordial intercourse with them. You speak of his visiting the poor. This I dare say was the case, but I was not aware of it, though I recollect, as distinctly as if it had happened yesterday, his giving away a religious tract to a beggar in the road, with words of religious advice."

A resident in Rugby writes thus of him:—

"He was at school a very remarkable character, having gained so much influence over the boys by his real excellence; so that while he was there the school assumed a different aspect from what had been the case before or since. Many of his schoolfellows were more or less led by his example. The boys used to go to neighbouring villages, and distribute tracts and visit the people. There was an open honesty in his countenance which would strike any one with the feeling that he was all he professed to be. Thornton was the only boy of the school with whom I have made acquaintance, without being asked to do so by some friend or relative. What I heard and knew of his remarkable piety made me wish to know him; and my intercourse with him was quite of a different stamp to what is usual with school boys. It even cast a different shade over all those who visited me at the same time. I have seen him once since—I think in 1844. He then told me that he traced his first effectual religious impressions to his preparation for Confirmation when at Rugby."

The following letter, from the Rev. Dr. Vaughan, to his mother, will be read with interest;—

"Harrow, March 14, 1850.

"My dear Madam,—I cannot regret the oppor-

tunity of expressing to you the deep respect and regard which I felt towards your son, my old schoolfellow at Rugby; where many have cause to remember with gratitude his useful and most Christian boyhood. I do not remember, perhaps, with great distinctness, any one trait of his character worth recording separately, though I was favoured with many marks of his kindness, and *might* have benefited much more than I did by his counsel and example.

"One thing I remember—his habit of rising early to secure time for devotion before the first Lesson began (and this was at seven); and I recollect his saying to me one day, how much he had felt ashamed at seeing some poor tradesman already at his day's labour in his shop, before he had begun his morning worship. He said something about our caring so much less for our souls than a poor tradesman did for perishable goods.

"His great object seemed to me to find out boys whose minds were capable of being led into good, either from early impressions, or from circumstances of affliction, &c. at the time. But he was very *unobtrusive*, I think, also, in carrying out his object, and would not force advice on those who shrank from receiving it.

"You know from Dr. Arnold's Life, in what manner *he* regarded him.

"My dear Madam, what happiness is yours in the loss of such a son! What a life of blameless holiness! What an *undoubted* entrance into perfect happiness, and without one day's suffering in the transition!

"May God bless and comfort you and all who mourn his loss.

"Believe me, my dear Madam, yours very sincerely,

"CHARLES J. VAUGHAN."

Spencer Thornton owed much to his excellent master, whose instruction and example had uniformly encouraged him in the religious course which he had adopted: and it is not, perhaps, saying too much, if we venture to add, that the penetration of so discriminating a mind as Dr. Arnold's, at once realized the value of a character so well suited to carry out the great moral improvements he desired to introduce into the educational system, in which so much depended upon the sincerity and consistency of such boys as Spencer Thornton. In a letter written by Mrs. Arnold to a friend of Mr. Thornton, she says, "I well remember with what respect and pleasure I used to look on one in whom I knew my husband had such confidence; and held and honoured the Christian zeal which led him so early and in such circum-

stances as were involved in a school life, to visit the poor, and so decidedly to take his stand on the side of good."

The interesting passage in Vol. i. p. 128, of Dr. Arnold's Life, refers to Spencer Thornton:—"If there be one thing on earth which is truly admirable, it is to see God's wisdom blessing an inferiority of natural powers where they have been honestly, truly, and zealously cultivated." In speaking of Spencer Thornton, he once said, "I would stand to that man, *hat in hand*;" and it was this feeling after his departure from Rugby, that drew from Dr. A. the most personal, perhaps the only personal praise, which he ever bestowed on any boy in his sermons.

The following is the extract from the Sermon referred to:—

"We may be quite sure that when two or three only are gathered together in Christ's name, there is Christ in the midst of them. And perhaps it may be a useful trial to most of us, to teach us thus not to lean upon the help of man, not to follow Christ only when others set us the example; but to serve Him, if need be, alone. How clear a proof is it of our weakness, if, because some human friend is taken from us, whose counsel and whose support helped

us forward in the service of Christ, we must now stand still or go backwards. Was it his influence only that encouraged us? Was it his example that served us for a pattern? Was it his countenance that made us not fear nor care for the rebukes and opposition of the majority? If he were all this to you, thank God for His goodness in having given you such a friend; but do not shame all that he has done for you, by showing that it has taken no root in your own hearts, that you were safe only while he was by. Much more, do not so wrong the power and the love of Christ, as not to know that he is more than the dearest earthly friend; that His influence, His example, His praise, are far more than those of man, and can never be taken away from you. And consider whether, if you have yourselves derived so much help from those who were before you in Christ Jesus, there may not be others who would fain derive the same help from you; whether there may not be some who are now, what you were a little while ago, just in suspense between good and evil; with serious thoughts awakened in them, but not matured; with a desire to do good, but with too little strength or steadiness of character, if left to themselves, to carry their desire into practice. Here there is a way opened before you in which you can

most fitly show your gratitude to those earthly friends to whom you owe so much, and to your Lord and Saviour, from whose loving care they, and every other good thing which you receive, are alike ministered to you. Let your influence and example be to those who are younger than you, what your friend's influence and example were once to yourselves; that so the succession of God's servants may never be broken off, but continue, and if it may be, with a larger increase, from generation to generation.

"I think that, in all probability, some who hear me, will have understood to what and to whom this is applicable. If, in speaking of those who have left us, the particular allusion could not be mistaken; yet what I have said of those who are left behind, is, I hope and believe, equally applicable to many. I should be very sorry to think there were only one or two individuals amongst us who desired to serve Christ heartily." (vol. iii. p. 352, 353.)

Dr. Arnold thus wrote to his parents upon Spencer Thornton leaving Rugby:—

"My obligations to your son are great, for he has done good to the school to an extent that cannot be calculated, and has left some behind him, I trust, who will follow his steps. It is far beyond all com-

mon congratulations to be blessed with such a son; and for myself, it will be a delight to me to see him, and to know him in his future progress through life. May we meet at last beyond it."

It would be difficult to bring within any reasonable space the many interesting records of this boy missionary, or do justice to the universal testimony borne to the effect of his zeal and consistency of character. The Editor has selected three letters indicating the terms of Christian friendship upon which he lived with his school-fellows.

1. *From a school-fellow residing in the neighbourhood of Rugby.*

"Many many thanks, my dear Thornton, for the very nice pamphlets accompanying your note. I have read one of them, and like it much; and trust that *we* (indeed all of us) may humble ourselves in the sight of God, who "searcheth the very heart and reins," that we may come to him with a truly penitent and contrite heart, acknowledging our offences, and pleading through Him who has *promised* to hear all those who *truly* call upon Him. May His Holy Spirit guide us continually, and draw us nearer to Him, that, being armed with His righte-

ousness, we may be enabled to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

"I know not when I shall be able to get over to Rugby, as the weather continues to be so stormy; but I hope to do so ere long.

"I was very sorry to hear of the death of young Shirley. It must indeed have been a severe blow to his parents; but I hope it may show them the uncertainty of this life. Truly, indeed, has the Prophet said, 'Our life is as a vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away.' Oh! that we did but consider this more than we do, and were induced, through faith in our ever precious Jesus, to lay up for ourselves treasures in Heaven,—to lay our hearts at the foot of His cross, that when He shall call us hence, we may appear before our heavenly Judge, arrayed in the wedding garments of His salvation.

"I will not now add more, as my sister intends writing you a hymn on the other sheet. They both desire to be remembered to you.

"May we, my dear Thornton, ever continue faithful followers of our blessed Lord, that we may, in His own good time, meet together as brothers, in a kingdom eternal in the heavens.

"Ah! see where He stoops from His sphere,
And bows to the earth His bright wings;

'Tis the voice of an angel I hear,
'Tis the song of Redemption He sings!

"'His name shall be Jesus.' The name
Almighty to save or destroy;
To the careless a beacon of flame,
To the contrite an anchor of joy!

"I have tried it when burdened with woe,
When my heart has been scared with its fears,
It quenches the darts of the foe,
And lights up this valley of tears.

"Pronounced in the whispers of prayer,
It sets the poor prisoner free;
It hushes the groan of despair,
And gives confidence *even to me!*"

"I hope, dear Thornton, we shall see you soon, and the two dear Mills likewise. Fred and I are very anxious to drive over to Rugby, and meet again our Christian friends there.—Adieu,

"F. W."

2.—*From a Clergyman, thanking Spencer Thornton for kindness shewn to his Son.*

"Ellough Parsonage, Aug. 17, 1832.

"MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—I beg you will do me the favour to accept the accompanying little volume, as a pledge of my esteem, and of the obligation which I have pleasure in feeling myself laid under to you by your kind and valuable attentions to my son.

"Sincerely and earnestly do I desire that this little book may aid you in your search after the treasures of Divine wisdom and love hidden in the Gospel of our Saviour Christ,—treasures alone worthy the anxious search of an immortal spirit, and found by all who diligently seek them according to the will of God.

"I am glad to have an opportunity of saying that it will give me real pleasure to welcome you to my little Parsonage, if at any time during your college vacations you can visit me. It is but a short day's journey from Cambridge, and I am within a drive of the sea.

"Accept the assurance of my very kind regards, and believe me, very faithfully yours,

"R. A. A."

3.—*From Rev. H. Budd.*

"Rectory, W. R., Aug. 18, 1832.

"DEAR SIR,—My son having informed me of your kindness to him, you will, I hope, excuse my expressing my best Christian thanks to you for the same. Having myself passed through a public school, I am not unaware how difficult it is for any one, desirous of preserving a consistency of Christian character, to maintain the same. I am not insensible to the advantage he may derive, under God, from

the attentions of those who are above him in age, as well as in religious knowledge and practice; and I deem it no small blessing that, being committed, he has the additional motive of consistency of character to urge him to go on his way to profess Christ. May I beg your acceptance of the accompanying tracts, which are all that I have yet completed; and upon which I must request you to beg a blessing. May the Lord strengthen you and all at Rugby who profess Christ, and show Him forth by a holy example, that many, seeing it, may fear God, and follow Him also.

"Should you ever be coming this way, it will give me pleasure to thank you in person.

"Believe me, my dear Sir, with all Christian regard, yours very faithfully,

"HENRY BUDD."

## CHAPTER II.

Letters to his brother Frederick—Search the Scriptures—Value of Time—Prayer and Reading—Effect of his Letters—Sin detected—Death—Pleasantness of Religion—Birthday Questions—The Love of God—The Happy Choice—His Brother's Accident—On Confirmation—Reality of Religion—Necessity of Conversion—On Early Rising—The New Year—His Brother's Death.

SPENCER Thornton was accompanied at school by his younger brother Frederick. And it appears, from expressions constantly occurring in the correspondence, that he exercised a most kind and wholesome influence over him. The brothers had their stated hour for reading the Bible and prayer together. In 1831, Frederick was removed from Rugby to a private tutor's; and this separation, so far from leading Spencer Thornton to suppose that his responsibility towards a younger brother had ceased, seems only to have excited him to greater earnestness and zeal in his behalf.

The following letters to Frederick bear witness to this; and they contain so much Christian feeling and plain good sense, that, notwithstanding the boyish tone in which they are written, they are inserted as

supplementary to the account which has been given of Spencer Thornton's life at Rugby.

"..... I received a letter from Mama on Tuesday, in which she mentioned a promise of Mr. Bickersteth to preach a sermon at Tewin for the Church Missionary Society. I hope he may be made useful to the poor people. His small "Scripture Help" is very useful as well as excellent. If you have brought a copy with you from home, I recommend you to give it a careful reading, for it truly deserves it..... Pray follow the exhortation given in John v. 39, and follow the example of the Bereans, Acts xvii. 11."

"Aug. 19, 1831.

"MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,—I hope you will do me the favour to accept the accompanying little book as a token of brotherly affection; which will not, I trust, be in any degree rendered cold by our separation for a season, but rather strengthened and increased when we look back upon the many past years which we have spent under the same roof and at the same school.

"We are now parting, and, although to our short-sighted minds it seems but for a season, yet in the mind of Omniscience it may be our last separation. Who can tell with how many thousand as yet unforeseen dangers we may each meet before we again

see one another! And as they are all appointed by God, any one may be sent to cut us off in an instant. Let us, therefore, make it our first and our great business to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, resting assured that then all other needful things will be added unto us.

"Let me beg of you, dear Fred, to read this little book with attention, and give the matter some thought, as it truly deserves. I would also strongly recommend you, for your everlasting welfare, to make it a practice to read the Bible daily, with earnest prayer for the teaching of God's Spirit. I can truly say from experience, that when at Rugby I have any day deferred my reading till late in the day, instead of making it one of my first duties, that then I have always found myself hurried, hardly knowing what to do first, &c.

"Farewell. But before I close, let me entreat you, *as you value your immortal soul,* to think upon these things; and believe me, that it is my earnest prayer that the Lord would teach you 'so to number your days that you may apply your heart unto wisdom.'

"Believe me to be ever your loving brother,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

That this appeal was not without some effect may

be seen by the following letter from his mother to Spencer Thornton, written immediately afterwards.

"Aug. 22, 1831.

"After reading with Fred, and talking to him, I gave him your parcel. He went into his room to read your note. After a little time he came down to your Papa and me. He appeared much affected, and could not for some time get over his sobs. He has been more attentive and less selfish, and I sincerely trust this may prove an important era in his life."

*To his brother Frederick.*

"Rugby, Nov. 2, 1831.

"... Mr. Anstey having resigned the chaplaincy, Dr. Arnold was appointed to fill his place. But that he may not appear to have accepted it from pecuniary motives, I hear he intends to give the salary every year to buy books for the Library. If this be so, it is very handsome of him ..... F., who has been drinking since dinner, has just been seen by Mr. Lee. How true it is 'The wicked shall not go unpunished;' and again, 'Be sure your sin will find you out.' .... There have been most sad riots at Bristol. .... Bishop Ryder was in great danger..... The mob, expecting him to pass through Coventry, laid ropes, &c. across the streets, intending to break his carriage to pieces, and I believe also to kill the

Bishop. He was providentially forewarned, and went another road. The country altogether is in a very alarming state, and the times do indeed call upon all with a loud voice, to 'Cease from man' and to 'seek the Lord *while he may be found,*' because 'the night is far spent, and the day is at hand.' I am glad to hear from Mama that she has contrived for you to hear Mr. ——, of Isleworth. I hope you will go every Sunday, and profit exceedingly."

### *On the sudden death of a school-fellow.*

"Rugby, Feb. 29, 1832.

"Dr. Arnold had not preached in the Chapel before Sunday, 19th, on which day he preached on the text, 'The greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep,' (1 Cor. xv. 6.) He spoke in high terms of B. I hope he was prepared; but whether he were or not, it affords us the same lesson. 'Be ye also ready.' 'Prepare to meet thy God.' 'Boast not thyself of to-morrow.' 'What is your life? it is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.' Oh! Dear Fred, let us each pray, 'So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.' How important it is in these solemn times to seek unto God. None are truly happy but those who have made God their Father and Friend. And besides,

how condescending it is of God to promise to become a Father to such rebellious children as are the best of men. And consider also the gracious promises which God makes to those who remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Prov. viii. 17, 'I love them that love me, and those that seek me *early* shall find me.' And don't think that religion is dull. Far from this. Its 'ways are ways of pleasantness,' and it has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. I cannot tell you how much happier I am now, since God was pleased to turn my heart, than when I was living in the love of sin. You can, I dare say, remember the time to which I refer, when I was deep sunk in sin. And I, too, remember the time when I thought I was too great a sinner to be saved, and was much troubled till I heard a comforting sermon from Mr. M'Neile on this verse, 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,' (Rom. v. 20.) I long for and pray that that happy time may soon come, when we shall be united, not only as brothers by blood, but also as brothers in Christ. How great will be our condemnation who have a pious mother, if we do not take pains to improve this blessing to the utmost. I trust you will not regard what I have written as a mere sermon; but as coming from one who most earnestly desires your

best interests . . . . . You will be glad to hear that I am now comfortably settled in my study . . . . . At first the fellows were very noisy, but they are now much quieter; so that I have scarcely any trouble. Lonsdale is in the sixth form. He helps me very much . . . . . I enjoyed my visit at Barford very much . . . . I met with W., who has been dangerously ill, but has been raised up again, and is now leading a new life, and a happier one . . . . . I hear that the cholera is in London . . . . . We cannot tell how soon it may reach Brentford, or Marden, or even Rugby. I hope you will continue in health, and that every good may attend you as to body and soul. The last day of the month! Time how short!"

*On Frederick's birth-day.*

"Rugby, April, 6, 1832.

"My Dear Fred,—The approach of the 8th inst. reminds me that I ought to write to you to congratulate you on entering your 18th year. How swiftly do the years fly away, and how rapidly are they bearing us along to that state which never ends! I cannot let this opportunity slip, without repeating to you, my dear Frederick, my earnest desires for your spiritual interests. It would be well for each of us (particularly on such occasions as a birth-day) to look back attentively on the years that are past, and see how

we have spent them; whether we have lived *a single day* as we ought, and as we shall on our death-beds (if such time be ever given us) wish that we had lived; whether we have *diligently* attended to the work which God has given us to do here upon earth; or even whether we have sought God *at all*, or regarded the "one thing needful" *at all?* In short, whether we have made it the business of any part of our lives to serve God, and keep His commandments? Alas! how have we lived in this world; as if we should never leave it! How unmindful of our latter end! How earnestly and how diligently have we followed up pleasures and amusements which tend to gratify us for a short time only, and which will not bring us any lasting advantage; but how forgetful have we been of eternity and its consequences! O, think of hell for ever! What a most solemn, most awful thought is that! And to think that we, each one of us, will live *for ever*, either in endless misery, or in endless bliss. But let us not stay upon these dismal prospects, the awful threatenings of God's word; but let us look at the great, the unsearchable love of God. Only think that 'God should so love the world,' which is filled with such vile sinners as each one of us is, and which had offended him by sin, and made him look upon its inhabitants as his enemies, '*so* love the

world,' I say, as to send 'his only begotten Son' to live upon this lower world in hunger, and thirst, and trouble, and vexation, and amid the insults of sinful man, and at last to endure a most painful death, even the death of the cross. Shall not this love then constrain us to love Him who has done so much for us? Think not, I beseech you, to defer this important business to a future time, which you think may be a more convenient season; but seize the present time while you have it. Make the approaching Sunday a day for examining yourself and your past life, and earnestly pray that it may be to you the beginning of a new life. Try to make it the best Sunday you have ever yet spent. Choose the ways of God now in youth, and you will never repent of your choice. It will make you happy now and through eternity.

"God has been pleased to send us a solemn warning lately, by taking away one of our school-fellows. He was not ill for more than ten days, and died of measles."

*On Frederick's being thrown from a horse.*

"Rugby, May 29, 1832.

"....I was exceedingly disturbed when I heard of your accident; but it is a fresh cause of thankfulness to Him who kept all your bones, so that not one of

them is broken. O let these unnumbered mercies, which are and have been showered down upon you from Him who 'is kind to the unthankful and to the evil,' now at length constrain you to surrender yourself to His service without delay. I hope you have by this time determined whether to use the opportunity afforded you for Confirmation now, or to wait till some future time. If the former, I hope it is not without solemn resolutions, through God's help and strength, to perform the vows which you then take upon yourself. Do not, I entreat you, halt any longer between two opinions; but let your determination be (at the very moment you read these words), 'Whatever others do, I will serve the Lord,' (Josh. xxiv. 15.) It is my heart's desire and prayer to God for you. '*Now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation.' Let not the devil or the world deceive you, or make you think that the service of God is bondage; no, no, it is far otherwise—it is perfect freedom. It will make you happy here and happy for ever. While a few fleeting years will fix you in that awful world, where *business* will no longer engage, and amusements will have no power to charm. And how *every moment hurries on* your final doom, and every beating pulse beats nearer to the last; and death, at the very door, is ready to introduce you to those unbounded and

amazing scenes! O what is worth a thought, but the favour of God and glory in the heavens! O what is worthy of a moment's care compared with making your calling and election sure! O think often upon the realities of hell and heaven! We so often hear them spoken of, that we are apt to think them nothing but mere dreams and fictions; but be assured that they are realities, and that each of us shall have to stand before the solemn tribunal of God, to give an account of the deeds done and the words spoken, in the body. With what shame and confusion of face shall we then be covered, if we now neglect God. How shall we dare to look in the face of that Saviour who died for us, if we now, by our own individual sins, crucify him afresh? We shall rather call to the mountains to fall on us, and to the hills to cover us, and hide us from the wrath of God and of the Lamb.

"I shall think much of you on the 7th, on which day the Confirmation takes place, I believe. Pray much for yourself, and be assured that I shall not forget to pray for you. One of the R——'s is lately dead—from intemperance and such like! How awful!

"Believe me to be your most affectionate brother,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

*On his Confirmation.*

"Rugby, June 6, 1832.

"DEAREST FRED,—I hope you may receive this to-morrow, after you have performed the solemn service of Confirmation. And suffer me, in the most affectionate terms, to remind you, that the vows of the Lord are upon you, and that you are *His, irrevocably His.* And now that you have vowed a vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for He hath no pleasure in fools; 'pay that which thou hast vowed,' Eccles. v. 4. This vow I trust you have not made without serious meditation, and solemn resolutions, in the strength of God, to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto your life's end. If so, doubt not for one moment God's power and willingness to strengthen and confirm your resolutions. Call to mind your past life, and see how you have offended God in thought, word, and deed, from the very first day when you had understanding till now, and see whether He has not protected your ways all your life; and since He has thus been present with you when you sought him not, will He not now be found of you, when you do seek Him. I can speak to you from some small experience, because I myself have tasted that the Lord is gracious; and if to me, why not to you also? 'Is His arm shortened that He cannot save; or His ear heavy, that He cannot hear?' *You can*

*remember to what a depth of sin and defilement I had reached at Hammersmith; and, on account of those sins in particular, I was for some time very unhappy,* and thought I was too great a sinner to be saved; but God graciously taught me otherwise, by causing me to hear a sermon from Mr. M'Neile, on Rom. v. 20. And I felt that as 'sin' had 'abounded' in me, so God would make 'grace abound' in me also. Don't be afraid of searching out *all* your sins, *even the worst of them,* and confess them all before God. For although He knows them, yet He expects you to confess them. 'Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy; but he that covereth them, shall not prosper,' Prov. xxviii. 13. 'Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God,' Jer. iii. 13. 'Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?' Jer. iii. 4. What words more kind, more inviting, or more affectionate, could God speak to invite sinners; but if we do not hear when He calls, neither will He hear us when we call. 'Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded, &c.' Prov. i. 24—30. I shall offer up my feeble prayers in your behalf to-morrow particularly, and as long as my life remaineth. Write

to me as a brother, as to one who desires to see you happy here and for ever.

"Your most affectionate,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

He adds in a subsequent letter:—

"I hope that any serious impressions you may have received, or good resolutions you may have formed after our reading together, have been strengthened and cultivated. As to the reading or rather *searching* of the Bible which I begged you to attend to, I should like to tell you what Luther said of it, at an advanced period of his life. 'The Bible is a fruit tree, which bears many thousands, and all various fruits. I have gone round this tree for many years, have looked at it and shaken its stem, and never shook it in vain. There is not even the smallest branch, from which, if properly struck, something does not fall;' may it be so with us!"

The following letters were written to Frederick from Cambridge, and during the Long Vacation in 1834; marking the providence of God, which directed him not to lose any opportunity of reminding his brother of the uncertainty of life, and the necessity of immediate preparation for eternity. The following year

(1835), Frederick Thornton being on a visit at the house of a friend, where a servant was ill with scarlet fever, took the infection, and died in a few days.

### *On Early Rising.*

"I liked our reading 2 Chron. together. My mother fears that you have not a Commentary, and therefore sends you one. I hope you will not neglect to read some part every day. I find at Cambridge I can easily make time for this in the morning. Perhaps in your business this would be difficult. You have a wonderful example of early rising in Col. Gardiner. He always employed two hours for private devotion and reading the Bible before breakfast; and when his regiment was on a march, he used to rise two hours before the appointed hour for moving, in order to redeem time for this purpose. Mr. Simeon is another example of early rising. For many years, while he was in good health, he rose at four, and remained in his room till eight, for private devotion and reading. Don't think that I want to recommend you to attempt impossibilities. I only mean to say, that if you caught time in the morning, by a little sacrifice (if not injurious to your health) it is well worth while.

"Let me entreat you also not to shorten your time for prayer morning and evening. It is one thing to

"say prayers," and another very different thing to "pray." It is a very great comfort that we are allowed to tell God in prayer every thing that distresses us. In short, this is what he wishes, and commands us to do by the mouth of David in Ps. lxii. 8, 'Pour out your HEART before him.' This is what we can do to no man. We are afraid and ashamed to tell all our feelings to man; but we cannot, or rather ought not to be ashamed of telling them to God, for He knows them already; and we learn from Heb. iv. 15, "We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.' Here then is great encouragement for us. If we are tempted to sin by our own hearts, or by the devil, or by others, if we strive against the temptation, He feels with us and for us, and will without fail give us strength against it, if we cry to him for help.

"I write you this long letter, because you have seemed to me to differ more in your opinions and habits, than I have observed before. I must tell you this has delighted me, because I remember that the Bible says, "the companion of fools (wicked men) shall be destroyed." It occurred to me, that if I were to try to encourage you to go on in this way, it might be a comfort to you. With this view it is I have urged you to diligent, daily, *prayerful* reading of the Bible, which King David found 'a lamp

to his feet, and a light to his path,' and which all the children of God have found the same. I have urged you to prayer, too, because the two must not be separated. Christ says, '*Watch* and *pray*.' It is well to begin and end your reading with a short *prayer*. *Believe* me, Dear Fred, to have your eternal interest at heart, and then you will understand my reasons for writing thus to you. . . . .

"I omitted to tell you how much I wish you would contrive to attend the school on Sunday afternoon. You will agree with me that an hour is not too long to give to one class. It is only reasonable to expect that the children will make progress, as they have much pains and time bestowed on them. Pray think about it, and pray that God will enable you to do his will in this matter, and not your own."

### "*On the Christian's Joy.*

"Trinity Coll., Cambridge, April 7, 1834.

"My Dear Fred,—I congratulate you on entering a new year; most heartily, and sincerely, do I wish that it may be the beginning of a new life to your soul. O! my dear Fred, I cannot sufficiently tell you the happiness of serving God. I wish I could speak more experimentally; but from the little trial I have made, I can say, that it is 'perfect freedom.' In short, the life of a Christian cannot be any thing but a life of joy;

for he is commanded to 'rejoice in the Lord alway,' Phil. iv. 4. It may be that he has nothing to do with the joy of the worldly man, but then his joy is of a far higher character, for it is 'a joy unspeakable, and full of glory;' and in one grand point it differs from all other joy, for this only is without 'heaviness,' whereas, I know and I am sure, you also must have found that in all other joy there is heaviness. So that if we seek happiness, as we all do, we shall do right to seek it in those things which give real happiness, for it is only 'godliness' which 'has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.' . . . .

"I hope you have found 'Bickersteth's Scripture Help' useful in leading your mind to the more habitual reading of the Bible. . . . .*

"I have talked much of the beauty of the country, but there is infinitely greater beauty in Him who is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. May God be pleased to show us both more of His goodness and of His beauty, till His love constrain us to love Him, and give up ourselves unreservedly to Him. We shall find it, through the Holy Spirit's teaching, in the Bible. . . . .

* An account of his enjoyment of the Lake scenery had been given in this letter.

"I have seen Dr. Arnold once. They have taken a house near Ambleside. . . . .

"I am thinking of returning home by Rugby, if it appears practicable, and is not objected to by my father. . . . .

"I hope you will not any longer defer to ratify at the Lord's table the vow which you made at Confirmation, remembering always the words of Solomon, 'Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pray.' But let me entreat you, at the same time, not to do this hastily, as it is perhaps the most solemn of all duties, in which you engage on this side the grave. Let a man examine himself, and *so* let him eat of this bread, and drink of this wine.

"Give my love to all, and believe me, your truly affectionate brother,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

## CHAPTER III.

**Commencement of College life—College friends—Employment of time—Mr. Simeon—Church Missionary Society—Scripture Readings Sunday School Visiting Society—Private memoranda—Letters on leaving Cambridge.**

SPENCER THORNTON entered Trinity College, at Cambridge, after the Long Vacation, in 1832, and seems at first to have set himself diligently to his work as a reading man; but he was soon engaged in duties which necessarily interrupted a close application to study, and in this respect he may have erred in judgment. This opinion has been feelingly expressed by some of his cotemporaries. On the other hand, his time was not idly spent in desultory amusement. He was not a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God; and when not preparing for College Lectures, he was diligently and earnestly engaged in some work having the best interests of his fellow-creatures in view. His one idea during his University course was preparation for the ministry; and all his pursuits were conscientiously made subservient to this great object. It must, however, be added, that while he certainly did not neglect

any duty which the rules of his College imposed, he did not make University distinction his first object. Whether or not the general influence of his ministry in after years suffered from this circumstance, may perhaps be questioned; but if we may judge from the result of his public examination—a subject upon which he was accustomed to speak with great humility—the honours which he took afford the best proof of his exertions. Be this, however, as it may, few young men have passed through a College life with a more conscientious regard for the value of time and the employment of the talents God has given them.

His strict attention to these points will be seen in a few extracts from letters written chiefly to his mother.

"I am glad to say I have not been so annoyed with visitors as I expected. I am in my rooms from eleven to two, and I am very seldom interrupted during that time. From two till four I walk, and if I have any unimportant visits to return, I do it then. F—— is quite of the same mind with myself. I will give you a pleasing anecdote of him. We generally contrive to read together on Sunday evening, between half past four and six, with R. H. As we were walking to Mr. Simeon's church in the

evening, we talked about a text in which we had found difficulty. F—— attributed it to our not having asked the divine blessing before we began. I answered, 'I should have done so, if I had been with H—— alone. This he did not at all like, that I should make a difference when he is with me. He is not only anxious about himself but for others also, particularly those with whom he is a little acquainted. I wish I could say as much of G——. He certainly does not seek me; rather, I think, the contrary. I asked him one day if he would go and hear Mr. Simeon; he promised he would some time, but I do not know when that time will come. When I proposed to my landlady to come up to my room with her daughter and servant every morning and evening, she seemed very glad of the opportunity.* You may think of us every morning at a quarter before eight, and a quarter before ten at night. I am reading the first book of Samuel, and the Epistle to the Romans, to them."

Again, he says,—"I have met with two who were at Mr. Elwell's with me; they appear to be very serious, and seem to be glad of a friend of the same mind."

* The Editor has been informed that the landlady, who became a very pious woman, traced her conversion to these daily services.

"6, Park Street, Cambridge, Oct. 22, 1832.

"I went last night, with several more, to Mr. Carus's rooms, where about twenty-five or thirty were assembled. We sit round, and tea is brought, Mr. Carus being the chief speaker. And before we left he read a chapter, and prayed. Our Sunday routine of duty is to attend chapel at eight o'clock; the University church at two, when a sermon only is preached; dinner at four; and chapel at a quarter past six. This throws a great deal of vacant time upon our hands, and it enables those who like, to attend Mr. Simeon's church at a quarter before eleven; which many do. His text yesterday was John xxi. 17. He said that, *First*, Many deviations from the path of duty cause our love to be doubted. The test is, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments.' *Secondly*, When it is doubted we should be grieved. He was asked thrice, and was grieved. *Thirdly*, That even after many falls, we may be so far recovered as to warrant an appeal to Christ that we love Him. In conclusion, he addressed, *first*, those who say they love Him, but do not; *secondly*, those who are in doubt; he recommended them not to doubt another hour; *thirdly*, those who can truly say that they love Him; 'If any man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto

him, and make our abode with him. It was altogether a very striking sermon. There were many gownsmen present. I called on Mr. Simeon to-day, to introduce Mr. —— to him; and although engaged, we were shown into another room, and he received us with the greatest possible warmness; and upon our apologizing for disturbing him, he said: 'Oh no! What? are we to sleep? Why, if I were to call upon you at your rooms, I should not find you asleep, should I? No, we must work while it is called to-day.' It is by far the greatest privilege we have here to hear him.

"Mr. Carus has already fixed upon me to fill an important post, in making me Secretary to the Missionary Society—I mean that branch which is established in the University. It has been very popular hitherto, till within a few years, when it has been rather sinking in its funds, and in the interest which it excited among the undergraduates. But when I tell you who was the principal author of it, you will say that I am highly honoured in being suffered so nearly to follow his steps. It was Charles Bridges, the author of the work on the 119th Psalm, &c. As much as £230 has been collected in one year. The annual subscriptions are generally about a guinea. My landlady has given me two shillings,

which she intends to continue quarterly, and two of her friends she has persuaded to promise two shillings and sixpence each per quarter.

"I am expecting to enjoy an hour or two with —— and two other friends, this evening, as being Ash Wednesday, and as the Sacrament is to be administered on Sunday in our chapel.

"I have just had a visit from ——. I tried to say what I could. I signified to him that I was well aware that he is not going on steadily. He said he should come here some evening.

"I looked in last Sunday upon a Sunday-school, which is managed by the young men of the University, and was much pleased. It is gratuitous. I think I shall probably enlist myself among its teachers, as it is rather in want. Such an employment seems to me a good training. I have seen a little of ——. He thinks of entering the ministry. I hope to get him to read Bridges."

"I am permitted, through Mr. Pym's order, under God, to visit every day two young men, who are left for execution from the Assizes of last week, for an attempt at murder. I am much encouraged with what I have already seen in them. Saturday week is the appointed day. I never felt my own insufficiency so much. Pray for me, that His strength

may be made perfect in weakness; that I may be taught how and what to speak; and may not be suffered to speak 'Peace, peace, when there is no peace;' and for them, that they may receive every blessing a broken and contrite spirit and faith, and the teaching of the Spirit, &c. &c. Engage, too, the prayers of all our brethren and sisters.* I long to be enabled to give you a good account of them; pray for us.

"I wish you could enjoy half the privileges which I have here. May God help me to improve them, for they are very many, and very precious. I shall be very sorry to leave this place, because of so many dear friends."

In this manner the three years of his College life passed away. Commending religion by his gentle manners and holy frame of mind, he acquired a degree of influence beyond his years and academical standing. He was selected to act as Secretary of the Church Missionary Association, and Superintendent of the Jesus Lane Sunday School, with the universal consent of the undergraduates connected with these institutions, many of whom were his superiors in talent

* Before he commenced this work he had engaged the prayers of several Christian friends in Cambridge.

and experience. His regular and methodical system of conducting the prayer meeting* at his rooms, when the Missionary collections were received, and his management of the school, walking with the children to church on the Sunday, and enquiring for the absent ones during the week, gained for him an unusual measure of respect and affection. Indeed, he took so deep an interest in his class, that upon one occasion, during the Long Vacation, he travelled to Cambridge, in order that he might see his young people once again before they attended the Confirmation, which was about to take place. A Society was formed for the purpose of distributing tracts, and visiting the poor, in the town and neighbourhood of Cambridge. About fifty undergraduates joined in this work, amongst whom Spencer Thornton took an active part. Many are the souls which owe their spiritual life to his labours. His walks to Grandchester and Chesterton are still remembered. In one of the villages allotted by the Society to him and his dear friend Mr. Ruthven Hore, (who is now

* A Clergyman in Buckinghamshire, in referring to the Missionary Association at Cambridge, said, that he owed his first religious awakening to a conversation with Spencer Thornton. "Where are you going this evening?" "To a wine party." "You had better come to our Missionary meeting." He went, and from that day commenced a new course of life.

with him in the presence of their Lord) they were accustomed to assemble the aged and infirm in two cottages, at either end of the parish, for Scripture reading and prayer. About twenty-five persons would attend, and if any were detained at home by sickness, they were afterwards visited in private. The intense earnestness with which Spencer Thornton laboured for the souls of these poor people, has been described in a very striking manner by a friend who accompanied him on one of these occasions. As they were leaving the village, a poor girl besought them to come and see her parents, who were in a state of great distress and spiritual ignorance. They went at once to the cottage, and found the old people lying upon two beds near one another, in the last stage of helplessness; and both nearly, or quite deaf. Spencer Thornton stood between them, and raising his voice louder and louder, asked the old man what he knew of Jesus Christ, and whether he believed in Him? Getting no answer to his repeated and anxious questions, he turned with a pale and distressed countenance to the friend who was present, and said, "We can only pray for them; it is like hollowing down a sepulchre." And then, upon his bended knees, he poured out his simple and fervent prayer that if it might be, the

Spirit of God would cause His voice to be heard by those whose ears were deaf to the entreaties of their fellow men.

It has been said that from twenty-five to thirty undergraduates received their first religious impressions through their intercourse with Spencer Thornton; and doubtless many in Cambridge, whose testimony is not known on earth, will, in the great day, rise up and call him blessed.

Nor is this to be wondered at, when we know what was the habitual state of his mind. We insert two specimens of his inner thoughts, found among his papers, bearing date April and August, 1835.

"Easter-day, April 19, 1835.

"I have to-day renewed my vows of allegiance to my great Captain. The vows of the Lord are upon me. I am more than ever His. I cannot go back; Luke xvii. 32.

"N. B. Found it very profitable to read the accounts from four Gospels, of transactions of each day in the past week. Have marked the help which one writer gives to another, and hence the blessing which we enjoy in having four different histories.

Feel need of the prayer in Ps. cxix. 66. See Bridges upon it.

"The Passion week has been a very precious one

to my soul. Conversation with ——. Trust it will not be forgotten. Oh! to be a little child!—a fool!—nothing!—

"Oh! when shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by Thee."

May Rom. vi. be exemplified and set forth in me. Oh! to 'know the fellowship of *His* sufferings, being made conformable to *His* death.'

"1 Sam. vii. 12. Numb. vi., last verses. Hallelujah! Amen."

"Sunday Evening, Aug. 23, 1835.

"Eben-ezer. Hitherto the Lord hath helped me. Found it *very profitable* and very humbling to the soul, and very painful to the flesh, to fast until 1 o'clock, when a little food being needful, I partook of a biscuit. At 5 I felt to want something more, and very low.

"O what is the consequence of sin! O that I ever may see it to be exceeding sinful. It robs God of His glory, and man of his happiness. I desire to learn how to value these mercies aright, since I find it very painful to be deprived of them. May I never think lightly of them, because they are common. Have read Ezra ix.; part of x.; Neh. ix. and x.; Isaiah lviii.; Joel ii.; Jonah iii.; Lamentations. May I tremble at God's word.

"I resolve, by the grace of God, from henceforth

frequently to humble my body and soul by fasting and prayer. I am convinced, by to-day's experience, that God has enjoined it for good, although I believe I never found it so before. I resolve to recommend these two means, fasting and prayer, to all others, after any heinous sin, or any special mercy.

"In the presence of the Most High God alone I write this, and to-day solemnly consecrate myself again to His service; giving up my body a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is my reasonable service.

(Signed) "SPENCER THORNTON."

A letter, written soon after this to his mother, is added, showing his peculiar tenderness of conscience in a matter in which he felt he had acted contrary to a parent's wishes:—

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,—This morning I received, with much thankfulness and joy of heart, your long letter, and I hope not without some sorrow too, which is increased the more I reflect that I have caused you any pangs. I feel assured that necessary ones are sufficiently numerous, and unnecessary ones should not be occasioned by the thoughtlessness of your children. . . . . I rejoice that you have given me your decided opinion on my past conduct, and on my present duty. And I trust that I shall feel

and show that 'Faithful are the *wounds* of a friend,'—especially of one that sticketh closer than a brother,—of one whose love seems referred to as the strongest in nature, by those sweet words, 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion, &c.;' and again, 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.' . . . .

"On the whole, I must own before God, that I have not honoured you or my father in this matter; because I have gone contrary to your wishes. I hope you will forgive this cruel unkindness and ingratitude, as I trust God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven me. And as long as God shall be pleased, in His mercy, to spare you to me, I shall strive, through His grace, to seek your will, and not mine; your comfort, and happiness, and joy, not mine. In short, I shall, I hope, seek to obey to the full those combined commands, 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right;' and again, 'Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.' Sorry I am that I have pained you with one thought about me, and glad shall I be if you may never have again to blame me for disregard to your wishes; and especially may you and my dear father never have cause to say with unhappy Jacob, 'Ye have brought down (or ye will bring down) my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.'

"Pray tell my father I am sorry for my sin, and believe me, my dearest mother, your dutiful and affectionate son.

"SPENCER THORNTON."

Spencer Thornton took his degree in January, 1836. He stood in the Class List, 22nd Junior Optime, and 2nd in the second Class of the Classical Tripos. Upon quitting the University he received many proofs of esteem from Christian friends.

From these valued tokens of affection found amongst his papers, we select the following.

1.—*Address in a Bible presented by the Sunday School Teachers.*

"PRESENTED TO SPENCER THORNTON.

"Trinity College, Cambridge, May 7, 1836.

"As a small testimony of the esteem with which they regard your character, and their approbation of the manner in which you have filled the office of Superintendent of the Jesus' Lane Sunday School, your fellow-teachers request your acceptance of the accompanying Bible.

"That the blessing of God may rest abundantly on your labours in a wider field of His husbandry, and that in feeding others you may yourself be fed, is their fervent desire and prayer."

(Signed by 26 Undergraduates.)

## 2.—*A Letter from the Sunday School children with a Prayer Book.*

"DEAR SIR,—We humbly beg your acceptance of this small book, as a token of our gratitude for all your kindnesses to us; especially your endeavours to promote our spiritual welfare. We are very sorry to bid you farewell, perhaps to meet no more in this world. The Lord alone can tell; yet we trust to see each other in another, to dwell together with our Father in heaven. May He guide you, and be your strength and support, in and through all your undertakings. *We* cannot *reward* you; but may *He* recompense your work, and give you a *full reward.* We remain, with humble but sincere wishes for your health and happiness, spiritually and temporally, your true, affectionate, and much indebted young friends."

(Signed by 22 children of the Jesus Lane Sunday School.)

In a communication made to the Editor by the Rev. R. Rowton, afterwards curate of Wendover, the following sentence occurs:—

"When I first went up to College in 1838, I found his name fresh in the recollection of the Jesus Lane Sunday School children, who had a great affection for him as their Superintendent. While I

was at Wendover, one of these, being in London, came down simply from the desire to see once more the Teacher to whom he possibly felt he owed so much."

### 3.—*Letter from a College friend to Spencer Thornton.*

"Christ's College, May 11, 1836.

"My Dearest Brother in the Lord,—I hope you will accept this little trifle, not measuring the love by the magnitude of the gift, that you may sometimes remember your unworthy but affectionate brother. I have much to be thankful for to our God, in raising me up a friend when I wanted guidance in the paths of pleasantness and peace, and I can never repay the debt of gratitude I owe to you for your kind forbearance towards me in so many infirmities and offences against God during my acquaintance with you. I do earnestly entreat your prayers, that the friendship begun on earth may be perfected in heaven, and that I may be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Forgive, my dear Spencer, all my want of love to you, all my levity and unkindness. May the Lord crown you with the richest of His mercies. May He give you to know more of His love in Christ Jesus, and give you a heart entirely devoted to His service.

May the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you, *rest* upon you, and remain with you always. Amen.

"Your truly affectionate brother,

"H. B. M."

We add another letter from a College friend to the Editor.

"March 15, 1850.

"I had the pleasure of his acquaintance in the early part of 1836, while we were both at Cambridge. He was then young, but much advanced in divine knowledge. His singleness of purpose and instant faith, together with an affectionate and ardent temper, marked him as a man without disguise, without any doubts of the reality of the spiritual religion which he felt and professed, and without any hesitation as to the duty incumbent on him to follow the Saviour, and to propose him as a Saviour to all within the range of his influence.

"He was at that time remarkable as a stirring Christian, and was constantly engaged in promoting and quickening the Christian life in others.

"He employed himself at that time in conducting a large Sunday School in Jesus Lane, in the management of which his mind was ever ready to his work.

There was no difficulty, no hesitation; the word was ever nigh him, in his mouth and in his heart.

"His public ministrations in the school were followed up by frequent weekly visitings among the children. He gained their hearts at once; and yet the sincere word of admonition was as ready as the expression of his kindly feelings towards them.

"The same faithfulness marked his intercourse with his friends. He never seemed to fear the consequences of speaking the truth. Although his mind was habitually fixed on Christ, yet he was not a man of only one idea. Christ was the centre of the truth which God had revealed to his mind, and he saw also the proportions of truth and its comprehensiveness. Hence there was no bigotry about him."

## CHAPTER IV.

**Ordination—Letter to his Father, declining his offer to purchase a Living—Appointed to Curacy of Watton—Letter from Rev. E. Bickersteth—Is appointed to the Vicarage of Wendover.**

Upon leaving Cambridge, Spencer Thornton was deeply impressed with the importance of preparing himself for Ordination, by learning the practical duties of the ministry under an experienced clergyman, and had entertained the idea of offering himself for a time to the Pastoral Aid Society as a Lay Agent. This plan, however, was rendered unnecessary by an invitation from the Rev. E. Bickersteth to assist him in the parochial work at Watton, Herts, which he gladly accepted, and entered upon his residence at Watton, in November, 1836. In the following February he was ordained deacon to the curacy of Watton. The disinterested views with which he entered upon his ministerial career, are expressed in a letter written to his father, in reply to a proposal to purchase for him the presentation to a living.

"Watton, May 25, 1837.

"My dear Father,—I have for some days been intending to write to you on a subject which is very near my heart. With your usual kindness and fatherly love, you have often contemplated the purchase of a living for me. Now, although I am far from wishing to tempt God by a sinful disregard of the future, and neglecting all means needful to procure myself a moderate livelihood, yet I desire to be as far from choosing for myself, or even that you should *absolutely* choose for me, in a thing in which I have already put myself into the Lord's hands, to be chosen for by Him. I have entered His vineyard, and have been numbered among His servants, to be called when and where He pleases. If I were engaged as Curate in an important sphere, with the charge of many souls, I could not, I dare not, provided my health continued as good as it is now, relinquish it to go and settle down on the lees with less work and more pay, to lead the comparatively easy life of a Rector. I heard, the other day, the following fact from good authority. Mr. H——, of Norfolk, purchased three livings for his three sons. They are all now holding curacies in important and populous places, and will not, cannot leave them, when the livings become vacant. I admire their conduct; and if similarly circumstanced, I think,

provided my health continued good, I should not dare to do otherwise than follow their example. This thought was brought before me some weeks ago, and I have been thinking of it since, and praying over it; and the more I consider it, the more thankful I am to have been led to see it thus, ere it be too late. I feel it is my duty thus to lay it all before you now, as it would be most painful to me to thwart your wishes after the die is cast. But while I write thus, I am far from wishing to hinder or discourage you from spending your money in so good a cause as that of planting the Gospel, and a faithful preacher of it, in some parish where it is not already found. This was the principle on which Mr. Simeon acted in the purchase of livings. His object was to spread the pure Gospel by spreading its preachers, especially in large, populous, and important cities. This seems to me to be the true light in which to view the purchasing of livings. That the motive should be, not to benefit a relation, or any individual, as in other and secular professions, but *souls*, hundreds and thousands of souls: *to get glory to God;* the same high and noble object which made Jesus part with his All—"to save sinners." If therefore you still entertain the thought of taking this step, I have only to entreat you to do it with this view—from this motive—without any

*direct* regard to *my* future ease and self-indulgence, or enjoyment, but with a regard to the interests of God's Church and the benefit of souls. And this makes me think preferment in a populous and neglected town much more desirable than in a village, because, usually, the opening for usefulness is wider.

"If it should please God, in His providence, to open my way to anything you might purchase in this way, of course I should gladly accept it; but I do not feel at liberty to pledge myself to anything we might choose, till the way is made plain by Him who sees the end from the beginning.

"Believe me ever, your dutiful and affectionate son,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

The character of his ministry at Watton will be best understood from the description given of it in the words of his beloved friend, Rev. E. Bickersteth; and they are the more interesting as they are among the last words which he committed to writing. Mr. Bickersteth says:—

"Having had the privilege to have this devoted servant of Christ assisting me as a fellow-labourer in the first exercise of his ministry; I send the following account to you in the hope that it may be of some use to my brethren in the ministry. With

plain good sense and energy, and deep personal piety, without any peculiar talent, my young friend made himself a constant blessing to all around with whom he had to do, and secured their love."

The year spent at Watton was one of much industry and efficiency; cottage readings, and personal visits to the poor,* occupied the chief part of his time; and strengthened by the holy and loving experience of his Rector, he made rapid progress in the affections of the people. And it would be difficult to say, when the appointment to Wendover was given to him by the Lord Chancellor, whether the Rector was more unwilling to lose his Curate, or the parishioners their young pastor.

The place which he held in the affections of the people at Watton, may be seen by a letter from his Rector.

* The following anecdote is well attested in Watton.—An old man, whom Spencer Thornton had in vain urged to come to church, was taken ill and confined to his bed. Spencer Thornton went to his cottage and asked to see him. The old man, hearing his voice below, answered, in no very courteous tone, "I don't want *you* here; you may go away." The following day the curate was again at the foot of the stairs. "Well, my friend, may I come up to-day and sit beside you?" Again he received the same reply, "I don't want *you* here." Twenty-one days successively, Spencer Thornton paid his visit to the cottage, and on the twenty-second his perseverance was rewarded —he was permitted to enter the room of the aged sufferer, to read the Bible, and pray by his bed side. The poor man recovered, and became one of the most regular attendants at the house of God.

"Watton Rectory, November 23, 1837.

"My beloved Thornton,—It gave me much pleasure to hear from you, as I trust that I shall ever feel a lively interest in all that concerns you. I owe you much for all your zealous labours and gifts of love to my poor parishioners, of which they retain a grateful and very affectionate recollection. I trust there has been also some spiritual fruit among them. This is our chief reward, and our joy in our labours.

"I doubt not that it is really advantageous to you to be thrown wholly on God in your present sphere. You cannot lean on that arm too closely, too fully, or too constantly. It has sustained me in His service nearly forty years, and in His ministry above twenty, notwithstanding all my weakness, waywardness, and unprofitableness. May you be filled with the Holy Ghost, so as constantly to be guided into all truth, have shewn to you the things of Christ, and be enabled ever to exalt Him in every sermon, in every visit to the poor, and in all your intercourse with others.

"We try to get among the poor more, now that we have lost you.... Poor things, they need it, both temporally and spiritually.... Christian love from all here.

"Ever affectionately yours,

"E. Bickersteth."

The affectionate recollection alluded to in this letter was conveyed to Mr. Thornton in several communications addressed to him by the poor of the flock.

The simple and touching manner in which their love to him is expressed, may be seen in the following extracts.

"We would, by God's help, think of thee at the throne of grace, and we request you to pray for the little flock left behind. The Lord bless thee and keep thee.

"We would not only pray for ourselves, but for you.

"Pleace to except a coppy of prayer offered up for *you* from a poor cottager.

" With heavenly power, O Lord, defend
(Him) whom we now to Thee commend;
His person bless, his soul secure,
And make him to the end endure.
Gird him with all-sufficient grace,
Direct his feet in paths of peace,
Thy truth and faithfulness fulfil,
Help him to obey thy will.
Before him thy protection send,
O love him, save him, to the end!
Enlarge, inflame, and fill his heart;
In him thy mighty power exert;
That thousands yet unborn may praise
The wonders of Redeeming Grace.

" Watton, Nov. 1, 1837."

The circumstances under which the Vicarage of Wendover was offered to him, left Mr. Thornton no room to doubt the providence of God in calling him to that part of His vineyard, and he gladly accepted the appointment: but it may be well to observe, that this important charge would not have been offered to so young a man, if he had not, in the first year of his ministry at Watton, given such good promise of in-

creasing usefulness and genuine piety. Mr. Thornton's feelings at this time are thus expressed:

"In the near prospect of being settled at Wendover, among 2000 souls, I tremble! I want wisdom, and judgment, and grace, and decision;—in short, the mind of Christ. Pray for me."

Again:—

"I have just enjoyed prayer with my little family for the first time. I read Josh. xxiv. 14, &c. I am not alone, for I feel the presence of God more precious than ever."

The following letter was written to Abel Smith, Esq., upon his commencing his residence at Wendover.

"Wendover, Nov. 14, 1837.

"My dear Uncle,—I have delayed writing to you till after I was comfortably settled in my new residence. But I now wish to express how thankful I feel to God, and to you under Him, for having placed me here. I feel that the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage. I hope that you will have confidence in the Lord touching me, that I do, and shall do, all things which I shall deem most conducive to the glory of my Master, slowly, and deliberately, and prayerfully, and shall consult you in measures which concern the place in which you are so deeply interested. . . . Every thing seems to promise well. M. and Mr. H. are very civil, thoughtful, and useful to me."

## CHAPTER V.

**Commencement of Ministry at Wendover—Situation and state of the Parish—First published Address—Review of two years—Sabbath Observance—Parochial Arrangements—Summary.**

DECEMBER 17, 1837, was a great day in the interesting history which we are pursuing.

It was the commencement of the last twelve years of a life devoted to the work of the ministry. On this day, the Rev. Spencer Thornton was admitted to Priest's orders, and instituted to the vicarage of Wendover, Bucks.

"Dec. 17, 1837.

"'Ebenezer!' I have this day been admitted by the Lord Bishop of Lincoln, at Buckden, to the holy order of Priesthood. And also instituted to the cure and government of the souls in the parish of Wendover, Bucks.

"I have found much comfort in the Service and in the Lord's Supper.

"I desire particularly to have always printed in my remembrance the vows of the Lord which are upon

me. And to this end I purpose, God helping me, to read the same over the last and first day of every month throughout the year, and to keep this day as an anniversary for humiliation, and self-examination, and prayer, particularly with reference to my ministerial character.

"I have fallen upon my face before the Lord. I have been much shocked by the profanation of the Sabbath in our country, and desire to bear in mind that I am to be among those who sigh and cry for the iniquities that are done in the midst of the earth. I have confessed in the most solemn manner, and have sought pardon for, the sins of my childhood, boyhood, of school and college, and the first ten months of my ministry.

"Read in the morning Isaiah vi. and Ezek. ii. Mr. Jeremie preached in the morning on 2 Tim. i. 7. His address to the persons to be ordained was very searching and powerful.

"The Bishop preached in the evening, in his private chapel, on Col. iv. 5."

The parish of Wendover is very extensive; containing 5000 acres, and, by the last census, 409 houses and 1920 souls.

Of these, 1200 reside in the town of Wendover, distant a quarter of a mile from the church; and the rest, called "The Foreign," are scattered in

detached cottages and little hamlets upon the Chiltern Hills, such as King's Wood, Lee Grove, Scrub Wood, at a distance of about three miles: these latter, having very gradually, and almost imperceptibly, grown up into a population, by building their huts upon the waste, were in a most neglected, rude, and ignorant state. The position of a young man of twenty-four, in the midst of such a population, with a heart burning with zeal for souls, may be easily imagined. If the task before him was arduous, and the aspect of his parish unpromising, he had the unspeakable comfort to know that there were many around him who earnestly prayed and longed for a blessing upon his labours, in answer to which prayers he might feel assured the Holy Ghost had separated him for the work whereunto He had called him.

The prominent idea of his ministerial labours was formed at once. He resolved to make himself personally acquainted with every individual in the parish. And we find him diligently engaged in visiting from house to house. In the Address which he published at the commencement of the New Year 1838, he refers to this object.

"The first time I addressed you from the pulpit,* I stated my intention of calling upon you all at your

* The text was Rom. xv. 29.

own houses. This my purpose I have not altered; but I have been prevented from putting it into effect by a late indisposition, which rendered me unfit for any exertion. I desire, however, to improve this circumstance to my own and your good, by reminding you that it well illustrates the words 'A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.' (Prov. xvi. 9.) I will now renew, in writing, my determination, which I hope, by the help of God, to fulfil in due time. In this way I shall trust to become gradually acquainted with you all.

"On Sunday, Dec. 17, I was admitted to the holy Order of Priesthood, and instituted to the Vicarage of Wendover. The relation in which I now stand to you, is one of the most interesting and important that can be conceived. The cure and government of the souls of this parish have been committed to me; and 'if it shall happen that the same parish, or any of the inhabitants of it, do take any hurt or hindrance' by reason of my negligence, I know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensue. I am called to be a messenger, watchman, and steward of the Lord in this place; to teach and to premonish, to feed and to provide, for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who

are in the midst of this place, that they may be saved through Christ for ever.*

"These solemn and weighty responsibilities lie upon me, and I desire and pray that I may have them always printed in my remembrance.

"But while I stir up *myself* with these considerations, I would also affectionately remind you of your privileges, and of the duties and obligations which are, in consequence, binding upon you. You have a great interest at stake; even nothing less than the everlasting salvation of your immortal souls. Oh! my dear brethren, what tongue can tell, or what heart can conceive, the value of one immortal soul! Who can give an answer to that solemn question, and say, 'What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' (Matt. xvi. 26, 27.) I regard you all with reference to eternity; and would labour that I may be able to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, in that day when He appeareth."

After more general and more particular exhortations, he closes the address with an assurance of his desire for their soul's good.

"The conversion of souls to God, would rejoice me more than any other thing. For this I labour;

* Ordination Service.

for this I pray; 'striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.' I shall always seek, as far as I can, to promote your highest aud eternal good. I shall generally be at home from twelve till one, and from six till seven, to admit the children to the schools, and to see you, to answer any questions, or give you any instruction I may be able, and shall feel it a pleasure to do so. Consider me as a sincere friend, as one who feels bound by the strongest obligation to seek your good alway. Come to me with all freedom. . . . .

"We are entering upon a new year, may we enter upon a new life. Let us determine, by God's help, to give this year to Him; to abandon every evil way, and to 'follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.'

"May the God of all grace abundantly bless us in our new relation of minister and people; may I have the comfort of seeing an increasing earnestness and seriousness in religion among you; and may you all have the joy of knowing that God is your Father, Christ your Saviour, the Holy Spirit your guide, Christians your companions, and heaven your everlasting home."

That these were not empty promises made in the early zeal of his new profession, but the living work

of the Holy Ghost within him, enabling him to carry into effect what he had purposed in his heart, may be seen from the summary of his labours, which is given in the second Address to his Parishioners, published on the first of January, 1840.

"I rejoice, my dear friends, that I am better acquainted with you now, than two years ago; although I am very sorry that I have not visited you from house to house so frequently as I could have wished. At the same time, believe me, whatever happens to any of you, interests me,—especially what concerns your eternal welfare. . . . .

"On the 17th January, 1838, a weekly Lecture was begun in the School-room, which now contains 240 persons.

"In February, a collection of Psalms and Hymns was introduced into the Church.

"In July, the Bishop of the diocese held a Confirmation in our church, when 81 out of 120 candidates were confirmed, most of whom had received instruction from me for six weeks.

"In August, our parish church was shut up for three months. It was re-pewed, and has since been painted and beautified. An organ has been presented, a stone font, and a handsome service of Communion plate and linen. The whole expense amounts to about £1100, raised by private contributions.

"In the same month, a new Society was formed, called 'the Wendover Provident and District Society,' instead of one which had existed previously. The parish is divided into ten districts. Six in the town, and four in 'the Foreign,' which are regularly visited once every week, by visitors appointed by myself, who collect the weekly savings of the poor, to be returned to them again in articles of food, clothing, or fuel, in the winter months, with a premium of ten per cent. They also visit the sick, and relieve them with such things as they most need; and they send me the names of the sick, that I may visit them.

"In the end of that year, feeling that the Lord's Day was very much profaned among you, by paying wages, buying and selling, I determined to begin the year 1839 with an attempt to remedy these evils. With this hope I drew up two short Declarations, one to be signed by farmers and employers of the poor, and the other by dealers. The former was signed in my presence by twenty-six persons, who engaged to pay their weekly wages on Friday, or not later than 12 o'clock on Saturday morning; and the latter, by 23 persons, who engaged not to open their shops, or manufacture any thing for sale, or suffer any of their goods to go out for consumption,

to be paid for afterwards, except baking dinners, and setting sponge, on the Lord's Day.*

"I am very thankful so many cheerfully agreed to these things; and I would affectionately entreat others also, neither to sell nor buy, pay nor receive wages, on any Lord's Day. I would also beg all persons who employ in or out-door servants, to consider the value of *their* souls as well as their *own*, and to give them no *unnecessary* work to do on the Lord's Day; but to make them do some on Saturday, and leave the rest till Monday. In every family there is enough that is *necessary* to be done, without allowing any *unnecessary* work. It is shocking to think how many poor boys and others are employed on Sunday morning to clean knives and shoes, while others are all day bird-keeping and shepherding! On this subject I beg you to read very attentively God's *command*, Deut. v. 12—15; the promise, Is. lviii. 13, 14; the punishment of a Sabbath breaker, Numb. xv. 32—36; and the example of a Sabbath keeper, Neh. xiii. 15—19.

"In May and June last I preached a course of nine sermons on the work of the Holy Spirit, and invited

"* With a little contrivance even this might be removed, if every one would be satisfied (as I am) with a cold dinner, or with leaving a boiler by the fire side. I should thus have the joy of seeing more bakers, and servants, and wives, at Church every Sunday morning."

some of my parishioners to join together in a union for prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

"In June, two new Teachers were appointed to the Infant School; and

"In September, a new Master and Mistress to the National School. And, lastly, a Library, containing 150 religious books, was opened."

The concluding remarks in this Address are deeply interesting; and the more so, because, upon the first copy which was sent him from the publishers, there is a note in pencil in his own handwriting, marking the number of times "I" or "Me" occurred.

"But why do I mention these things; is it for boasting or vain glory? God knoweth it is not, but to make you sensible of your advantages, and privileges, and responsibilities. The last two years have overflowed with mercies to you and me, and I desire to stir up you and myself to a grateful sense of God's goodness to us. All these benefits which God has given you, leave you deep in debt. You have many opportunities of *knowing* your Lord's will, take heed that you *do* it.

"In conclusion, my dear friends, I would earnestly assure you how much I love your souls, and desire your present and eternal welfare. I am always ready

to serve you in any way I can best do so. I shall generally be at home at *eight* o'clock in the morning, and can see you at that time. Consider me as your real friend; as one who feels bound by the strongest obligations to seek your good always; and come to me with all freedom. I thank you for the kindness you have always shown me when I have called upon you, and hope that I shall be able henceforth to visit you more frequently and regularly from house to house, especially as it has pleased God to give me so valuable a partner to labour with me in the Gospel.

"There is one more alteration which has been made, with a view to your benefit, *i. e.* administering the Lord's Supper more frequently, *six* times instead of *four* in the year, as has been usual hitherto. During the next year I hope to administer it *seven* times. I am sorry that any should think this change undesirable, because I conceive, if it is your duty and privilege to do this *four* times in remembrance of Christ, it is a still greater privilege to do it more frequently. And it must not be thought that our Church ever intended it should be celebrated only four times in the year, especially as the Scriptures declare that the first Christians 'broke bread' every Lord's Day."

His engagements, which were punctually fulfilled,

were printed under the head of "Information for the use of the parish."

"*Days of Baptism*—The First Sunday in every month.

"*Days for the Lord's Supper*—Feb. 23, April 19, June 14, Aug. 9, Sep. 27, Nov. 8, Dec. 25.

"*Communicants' Meeting*—The Thursday before the Lord's Supper.

"A Meeting is held on Saturday Evenings, at the Vicarage, at 7, of the Sunday School Teachers, to prepare for the following Sunday: any other persons may attend.

"*The Lectures*—At the School-room on Wednesday Evenings; at Scrub Wood on Thursday Evenings; at Lee church on Friday Evenings.

"*Scripture Readings*—At Widow Pratt's on Tuesdays at three; at Mrs. Hoare's on Wednesdays at one; at William Beckley's on Thursdays at three.

"*An Adult Class for Males* on Sunday Evenings at the School-room.

"*A Writing and Bible Class for Females* every Thursday at 3 o'clock at the School-room.

"Bibles, Prayer Books, and Hymn Books, are sold very cheap by Mr. Taylor, Schoolmaster.

"*Lending Library*—Open from twelve to one every Friday."

Such was the result of his first two years at Wendover.

## CHAPTER VI.

**His Marriage—Reflections upon it—Extension of Ministry—Lee—Monday School—A Curate appointed—Temperance Society—Third Address to the Parishioners.**

In September, 1839, the Rev. S. Thornton married Miss Caroline Du Pré, the seventh daughter of James Du Pré, Esq., of Wilton Park, Beaconsfield; and his joy in having one so entirely like-minded to assist him in his parish, appears in letters written at the time. He says:

"To receive my friends' congratulations, is not one of the least joys which I have now; and in looking back upon all the way God has led me these twenty-six years, I am astonished, and wonder. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. I am particularly grateful to my heavenly Father for his late mercies. I find my great prosperity and innumerable mercies are my snare. Instead of leading me to adore the Father of them all, they are abused by my wayward heart. I need that command constantly sounding in my

ears—'Keep yourselves from idols.' 'My grace is sufficient for thee,' is a great comfort; and 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things?' At such a time as the present, I value my Sundays doubly. If all was so very smooth and easy here, we should wish to stay here for ever. Everything seems to have a voice, and to say, 'Arise ye, and depart; this is not your rest.' We shall be truly happy if we are truly holy. I have employed much time to-day in musing on the loving-kindness of the Lord to me. Indeed, my life has been a chapter of mercies; and I reckon my present ones as amongst the greatest next to the pardon of sin. I like so much 'Terstegen's Advice to Parting Friends.'.... I think the most perfect character on earth would be Martha and Mary united. This is what I long to see in myself.... I thought it very sweet yesterday to draw near to Jesus in His Supper, at a time when one is tempted to cling closer to a creature than to the Creator. In contrasting the love of God to man, with the love of man to man, which I have done much lately, I have been struck with the former part of Ezek. xvi. How wonderful, that God should love us in our sins, and what a constraining power has love!"

Mr. Thornton's marriage greatly extended his

sphere of usefulness. New plans were instituted, which united the influence and co-operation of the female members of his congregation; and we find him directing his labours to the more distant parts of his parish. In the third Address, published in 1841, reference is made to the changes which had taken place at the commencement of the previous year. A Ladies' Working Society had been established, for the purpose of providing cheap clothing for the poor; and a Coal Club, for receiving weekly deposits. "In 1840, the Rev. G. A. Langdale was ordained to labour with me in the Gospel; since then, three additional Services are afforded to the parish, and the sick and the whole are more regularly visited. 'The Foreign' is, as you know, his charge."

The circumstances which led to this appointment require some explanation.

A hamlet containing about 200 of his parishioners was situate upon Lee Common, distant four miles from Wendover, but immediately adjoining the parish and church of Lee, which forms a sort of peninsula within the boundaries of Wendover parish. Mr. Thornton had long felt the difficulty of providing religious instruction for these poor people, who were as sheep without a shepherd, there being no resident clergyman at Lee, and only one Service in the church upon the Sunday. He had endeavoured to obtain

a suitable building, in which to hold a weekly lecture, and a school. At length a Baptist chapel, standing upon the Common, was offered for sale, which, by raising a subscription amongst his friends and parishioners, Mr. Spencer Thornton purchased for £150. The chapel was opened as a School and Lecture-room; and as the congregation increased, Mr. Thornton offered to perform one Service every Sunday in Lee Church, in addition to that already supplied by the Clergyman. The offer was accepted and sanctioned by the Bishop, and Mr. Thornton preached his first sermon at Lee, on Aug. 2nd, 1839. This additional duty upon the Sunday, with the Evening Lectures during the week, rendered it necessary for him to obtain help, and hence the appointment of a Curate. One of his schemes for supplying the lack of a Sunday School at Lee, is worthy of being mentioned. As there were no teachers at Lee, Mr. Thornton engaged the Services of as many of his Sunday School Teachers at Wendover, as could spare two or three hours upon the Monday afternoon, to accompany him and Mrs. Thornton to Lee, to hold what he termed "The Monday School." And many a refreshing walk has the Minister, and his little band of Teachers, taken across the hill on these interesting occasions. The Rev. Mr. Rowton gives the following account of one

of these expeditions. "Monday was always an interesting day there, on account of 'the Monday School,' which he had formed himself, collecting children from the Commons, and carrying up a carriageful of Teachers with him. That was a day on which I used to notice, as I often had occasion to do at other times, his peculiar power of winning the attention and affections of children, and the ready way in which he would seize on any passing circumstance to convey instruction to them. One day there was a sheepshearing going on a few yards from the school-room. This was an opportunity not to be passed over. So the children were asked, 'Boys, what are your jackets made of? Girls, what are your shawls made of?' *Ans.* 'Cloth.' 'What is it made of?' 'Wool.' No one knew what he was aiming at. By degrees he traced the material through various hands to the sheep's back, asking them if they had not looked at the sheepshearing; and then, in a very solemn manner, bidding them observe how the sheep had its own back stripped, in order to provide a covering for them; he then told them of the imputed righteousness of Christ. I cannot, however, convey by words the expressive countenance of our friend, or the eager attention of the children, while he thus spoke."

Upon the resignation of the Curate of Lee, in

1847, the nomination of his successor was placed in Mr. Thornton's hands; who, in order to secure a resident clergyman, contributed £40 per annum to the salary, and nominated his dear friend and fellow labourer, the Rev. W. Walton, who has efficiently, and, under God's blessing, succesfully, carried out all Mr. Thornton's plans.

In September 1841 Mr. Thornton made his first directly aggressive movement against the habit of intemperance, the prevalence of which we find him frequently lamenting. As we shall have occasion to enter upon this subject more largely hereafter, it will be sufficient to give Mr. Thornton's remarks upon the formation of the Wendover branch of the Church of England Total Abstinence Society, which appear in his third Address.

"We recommend the intemperate to join it as their only safeguard;—the temperate, as an example and encouragement to others.

"I trust time will shew that a deep and lasting effect has been produced, under God, by the interesting speech which Mr. Rotch made at the second quarterly meeting last week; and that many more, deeply feeling the reproach that intemperance is to our parish and nation, will join hand and heart

in seeking to roll away this foul disgrace from the midst of us. . . .

"Gladly would I have no evil thing to say of you, but, alas, 'some men's sins are *open*.' 'Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly: whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.' Let us trace these evils up to their source. Your children are 'conceived in sin,' and 'go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies;' and unless you teach them early to know God, they will, if His mercy prevent it not, grow up hardened in sin, and perhaps bring down their parents' grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Who is not shocked to see the ill-behaviour of many *children* at home, and to hear the profane oaths and filthy language of the *idlers* who flock together after dark under the Market-house and in the streets! Or what shall we say to shame those who choose the ways of vice —who 'do evil with both hands earnestly'—who work all uncleanness with greediness—practising the works of the flesh which are described Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. Have you forgotten the solemn charge of the Apostle, Eph. v. 3—5? Remember 'righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any

people ;'—rioting and drunkenness, even at fairs and in harvest, are a reproach: domestic differences, misdemeanours, and assaults, such as have occurred among us, are a reproach:* dishonest dealings, poaching, and thieving, are a reproach. The conduct of many of the young men is always a great grief to me. I charge you fathers, use your authority to keep your children from bad companions, and from idleness and mischief. Send them regularly to school, and teach them likewise, at home, and so bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Restrain their youthful passions with your authority, remembering that God said of Eli, 'I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.' "

He had now commenced a monthly administration of the Lord's Supper; and his "Information for the Parish," for the year 1842, shews the steady increase of his congregation.

The collections for Charities had been very considerable during these two years:—For the Coal Club; Friendly Society; Provident Society; Work-

"* In the last two years 33 summonses and 34 warrants have been issued against some of my parishioners, and 9 persons have been fined or imprisoned for different crimes. Is not this a reproach? See Eph. iv. 28; 1 Pet. iv. 15."

ing Society; Bible Society; Church Missionary Society; Pastoral Aid; Infirmary at Aylesbury; and National Education Society—the sum of nearly £270. had been raised, in addition to £45. Sacrament money. And the following plan of engagements will shew the activity with which his system was carried out.

"*Information for the use of the Parish.—For the Year* 1842.—*Psalm* xc. 17.

"BAPTISM—*The First Sunday* in the Month. The LORD'S SUPPER—*The last Sunday* in the Month. COMMUNICANTS' MEETING—*The Friday* before the Lord's Supper.

"EVENING LECTURES:—*Sunday*, at the Junction and Scrub Wood; *Tuesday*, at Ten Houses and at Lee; *Wednesday*, at the Junction; *Thursday*, at Thirty Houses and Scrub Wood.

"BIBLE READINGS:—*Thursday*, at Edith Phillips's, at 3; *Friday*, at John Wright's, at 3.

"BIBLE CLASSES:—*Sunday*, at 9½, at the Vicarage, for Females; *Monday*, at 6 in the Winter, at the Junction, for Males; *Tuesday* (2nd and 4th), at 3, at the Vicarage, for Ladies; *Wednesday*, at 2, at the Junction, for learning to read; *Thursday*, at 1, at the Junction, for Females; *Thursday* (1st and 3rd)

at at the Junection, 7,for Servants; *Friday*, at 6 in Winter, at the Junction, for Males; *Saturday*, at 2, at Ten Houses, for Females.

"MEETINGS:—Of District Visitors, the *first Monday* in the month, at 4;—Of Ladies' Working Society, the *third Tuesday* in the month, at 2;—Of Sunday School Teachers, the *next Friday before the Full Moon*, at 7;—Of Prayer Union, *the next Saturday before the Full Moon*, at 7.

"LENDING LIBRARY:—Open from 12 to 1 *every Friday*; Subscription 1*d.* per month.

"An Invalid Wheel Chair is kept at Mr. Hewlett's, and lent to convey any Infirm person to Church or Lecture."

Amongst other benefactions to the parish, he mentions one with peculiar satisfaction.

"A valuable church clock has been presented to the parish by your late much-respected Vicar, the Rev. Charles Turnor, as a testimony of the sincere regard he feels for those with whom he was so intimately connected during thirty-five years' residence. Let the clock remind you that time is short; therefore, 'Redeem the time, because the days are evil.'"

## CHAPTER VII.

**Disposition of time—Parish Memoranda—Conversations with Parishioners—Confirmation—Register of Communicants—Baptism of an Adult.**

It may be useful to give some account of the method by which Mr. Thornton accomplished the task which he had marked out for himself. Many of his friends have expressed surprise at the amount of actual work which he got through; a sketch of his usual daily occupations will explain this.

Every evening in the week was set apart, more or less, for personal intercourse with the parishioners; a subject which Mr. Thornton always considered of the first importance in a rural district.

In order to carry out his plan of giving the first part of the day to communion with God, his Study fire (in winter) was laid over-night. He usually rose at 6. He considered early rising very important. Private reading and prayer occupied him till breakfast at 8, or half-past in winter. He wished to spend the whole morning in his Study, but was

often obliged to visit the schools, or some sick person, before 1 o'clock. This was generally his dinner hour; after which, visiting in the parish, classes, and lectures, occupied him till half-past 8, for four days in the week. Saturday evening he passed in his Study. He shewed, by every word and action, the importance of living near to God.

In order to form a just estimate of his system, it must be borne in mind that Mr. Thornton adapted his plans to circumstances, as they were suggested to him by his increasing knowledge of the social condition of the parish. The efficiency with which he carried his plans into operation, arose entirely from his intimate acquaintance with the individual members of his flock. Not only was his memory retentive, so that he knew and remembered the name and age of almost every man, woman, and child in the parish; but he also kept accurate registers of Communicants, Confirmants—indeed, of all who were connected with his ministry. For example, he took down the names of those who stood as sponsors at Baptism, looking forward to the time when he might, if he had lived, have appealed to them to fulfil their duty, in yielding up their charge at the time of Confirmation.

In one manuscript book, commencing Nov. 4, 1837, and ending Dec. 1847, a record is given of a num-

ber of visits, and conversations, and events, in a concise and pointed way peculiar to himself. A few entries are given.

"*Nov.* 4.—I visited John Davey; Ps. li., 2 Sam. xi. xii.;—S ———, deranged;—Emma Smith; Ps. li.;—William Woodley; Heb. xii.;—Betsey Trap; Ps. cii.;—Edith College; 2 Sam. xi. xii. Ps. li.;—Widow Pratt; Ps. li.;—Esther Phillipps; John ix.;—Mrs. Ingram;—J. Beckley;—Wright and wife (two loaves and three shillings);—Mrs. Hoskyns;—Joseph Hopcraft; Ps. li.;—Mrs. Hoare; Heb. xii.

"*Dec.* 10.—Visited ten families at Scrub Wood and Dunsmoor; sadly neglected; children unbaptized; gave petticoats to thirty-six girls, and pinafores to fifteen; petticoats and shirts to 106 infants.

"*March* 3.—Old E. F. died in peace.

"*March* 10.—Examined T. B., and A. F., and ——, and ——, and ——, and ——, about money which T. B. took from —— drawer. T. B. is much in fault, and has stolen. She confessed it, but said A. F. persuaded her to it; and A. F. denies. —— told me three lies!!!! There were present S. W., and Mr. W. F., jun.

"*March* 15.—Visited ——, and ——, and ——, and ——. All self-ignorant and self-righteous!! —— is humbled under sin.

*June* 9.—Anne Jennings died after a lingering

illness. I visited her often. She was always attentive, though unimpressible. She never said much till one day near her end she opened her mouth and said something as follows: 'I have often wished to speak to you, but I have always been too weak when you came. But I want to tell you how good God has been to me. I have been a sinner, a great sinner. I have forgotten God. My heart is very wicked and deceitful. But God has been very kind to me. I cannot tell you how good God has been to me.' I said, 'Does God love you?' She replied, 'Yes, or He would not have spared me here so long.' A neighbour sitting at the foot of her bed, said, 'She mentioned a passage yesterday, Sir, which she said, if she died happy, she would like you to speak upon.' I said, 'What is it?' She answered, Ps. ciii. 8—14.' I read it and said, 'Anne, do you wish me to speak upon that at your grave, or in the pulpit?' Her answer shewed that she meant in the pulpit. I said, 'Why do you wish me to preach upon it?' She said, 'That others may know how good God has been to me.' After she had dwelt much upon her sinful state, I said to her, 'Have you told this to God, just as you are doing to me?' She said, 'I have, if my wicked heart does not deceive me.' Her neighbour sometimes overheard her praying.

On June 17th Mr. Thornton preached her funeral sermon on Ps. ciii. 8—14, as she had desired.

"*Oct.* 22.—Called at C——, and World's End. Mrs. K. is slow to come to Church. Miss ——— will take Miss C.'s class, and wishes to take her district. I begged her to pause, because she is not a Communicant; sent her a book on the Lord's Supper.

"*Oct.* 30.—Visited G.; much alarmed—confessed—vowed.

"*Nov.* 3.—George Munday died. I trust broken and contrite.

"*Dec.* 20.—Nelly Nash died. I had seen her only once or twice, as I had been ill. She seemed sensible of sin and contrite—said she prayed.

"*Dec.* 23.—Re-admitted Toney to Sunday School on promise of good behaviour. Expelled Jane Jeffkins till I see her improved. Had long conversation with ——. He is unhappy and unsettled. Feels he has no friends in the Church. Complains of want of love in the members, though he does not wish the difference of rank to be done away. Has been often to the Baptist Chapel in the evening. The members sometimes say to him, 'I suppose you love Jesus Christ; then you would wish to keep his commandments.' He says, 'He that believeth and is baptized,' &c. He expressed much love for me;

more than to his father and brother; and so did I for him. I feel he is one of the first-fruits of Wendover to me. He said when I first came, he was one Sunday evening in the George with others (J. and E.), and some one said in conversation, that there was a new Minister come, who said no beer must be sold on Sunday; to which he observed, '*I hope he will not stop here long!*' He said he was thankful he came to teach in the School. It was the happiest Sunday he ever spent. I urged him not to leave the Church. I advised him to spend his Sunday evenings at home in reading and meditating on what he had heard. I pressed him to come to the Lord's Supper on Christmas Day.

"*Jan.* 1.—Mr. T. humbled.

"*Jan.* 3.—Saw Mr. T. softened, though not very open to me.

"*Jan.* 7th.—Administered the Lord's Supper to Mr. T. and ——, ——, and ——. Mr. T. was very tired. He said, 'I am very thankful.'

"Jan. 14th.—Mr. T. died. I have hope in his end. Often have I visited him when down stairs. I have left him with a heavy heart. I have been led to pray for him the more. He always trusted to the mercy of God, thinking he had made none to perish. He kept his bed for three weeks; was very penitent; often exhorted his wife, saying, 'Whatever you do, be

"R. B. came to the Vicarage at my request, after a note received from him.

"I said, 'What is it, Richard, that you cannot hold with the Church?'

"R. B.—'Why, Sir, you think we can only be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, do you not?'

"'Yes, Richard.'

"R. B.—'But how is it that you say, I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins?'

"S. T.—'See Acts ii. 38, where the same is said, and 1 Pet. iii. 20.

"R. B.—'But it is said, We are buried with Him in baptism—i. e. believers.'

"S. T.—'Yes, and you promised faith.'

"R. B.—'I could not promise this for any one.'

"S. T.—'I am sorry for it. But the address, "Ye are to take care," &c. explains the duty of sponsors. Is there any other difficulty you have?'

"R. B.—'Yes. You don't think every child baptized is regenerated, do you, Sir? I was not.'

"S. T.—'How do you know you were not? Perhaps the seed of regeneration was sown in your heart then, though it lay dead a long time, as Paul said, 1 Cor. xv. 36.'

"He then said he wished the Prayer Book had never been written, or that it had all been taken from

the Bible. He said he liked the lecture very much. It was all the Bible. He professed much love to me, and loved me more than any human being, not excepting his parents. He spoke of Mr. Bulteel, who was to preach on Thursday, April 25, at the Independent Chapel at Aylesbury. I lent him 'Village Dialogues,' by Rev. A. Crowdey, begging him to read it. We prayed together. I advised him to pray much to God about the matter. He said, 'Mr. T. nor any one else advised him to leave Mr. Thornton's.'

"*June* 4.—Died, of fever, J. V. She had been very ill in a confinement in 1838.—Seemed very penitent."

"Gave directions to the Infant Scool Teachers. —To have their gowns made full, not tight, in front. To have them long, not above half an inch from the instep. To have them made high, nearly up to the throat, with a neat collar. To wear a neat plain cap, without flowers, bow, or ribbons; only a ribbon to tie under the chin, and this not half off the head, but put on nicely; the border nearly touching the forehead, and the hair simply parted, without curls. To have no ear-rings or necklaces. To have neat shoes and stockings—thick in winter, as the bricks of the school are cold. Bonnet to be made

according to the directions I have given for the cap; and to observe these things on Sundays particularly.'

"Saw S. Langston. She chose Hymn 574 to be sung at her grave. Said she wanted full assurance, but trusts in the word of God. She would not choose life if she might recover, but would rather go to Jesus. She spoke with much gratitude of Mrs. Grover's visits.

"Lecture on Ps. xcv. Read Shepherd on Common Prayer from p. 112 to 126, in parts. Next month notice Gloria Patri.

"*June* 7.—Died, Sarah Langston.

"*June* 11.—Buried Sarah Langston. Mary was much affected when I spoke at the grave, and said that three sisters had died within one short twelvemonth: Anne on June 11, 1838; Elizabeth, July; and Sarah, June 7, 1839. All in the Lord, I hope.

"*July* 9, *Sunday*.—T. D.'s horse ran away with the gig, when it was returning from Tring. C. F. was not in it at the moment. The horse was hurt. C. F. told me he did not like to break the Lord's Day, but his conscience became seared, like many more.

"*July* 14.—I wrote a long letter to T. D. about it, and sent Judge Hale's tract and handbill, 'The Soul a Precious Jewel,' and many texts, Ex. xx. 10, and Jer. xvii. 19, &c.

"*June* 11, 1840.—Explained at Communicants'

Lecture, 'It is very meet, &c.' to 'therefore with Angels,' &c.; 46 present.

"Long conversation with P. O. He admits a Supreme Being, but not the truth and divine origin of the Bible. I argued from the prophecies of Tyre and of the Jews, in Lev., and Deut., and Matt. xxiv. Prayed him to come to church weekly, and read the Bible, and pray daily, and at the end of twelve months say if the Bible is true or not. Recommended him a reference Bible.

"Same day visited J., found him reading novels. Excuses himself in sin and neglect of God. Wrote strongly to G. N. about his conduct.

"Examined into certain tales about —— and ——. Gave —— a reprimand. Excluded her from communion for six months.

"Suspended —— from Lord's Supper for four times.

"G. R. was returning home in the evening from G——, with £3 in his pocket. Two men stopped him, knocked him down, and took his money. *Mem.* A few days before, G. R. was drinking wine which some young men had stolen out of Mr. O.'s cellar. 'It is a righteous thing with God to punish the wicked!!'"

The following account of his Confirmation Classes

is selected, as giving a specimen of the great interest he took in an ordinance which had been so much blessed to himself. He had written to all the heads of families throughout the parish, to learn the names of those who were of an age to be confirmed.

"*Confirmation, March* 10, 1847.—15 Females, 16 Males." [Against each name he has noted his opinion of the individual.]

"This season of preparation was deeply interesting to me, and, I trust, profitable. There seemed a large outpouring of the Spirit; so much so, that they who began their attendance in a light and trifling mood, became serious, while others dropped off by degrees. The instructions were in the Church Catechism and Scripture, and lasted for six weeks, two in every week. Females on Monday and Wednesday, at four; males, at eight. I had two private interviews with each. The Bishop's Charge, and his manner of conducting the whole Service, was deeply affecting, powerful, and solemn. After Service, all the Confirmants drank tea together in the school room, after which the Rev. E. Owen addressed them, and I prayed. The out-parishioners then went home, and I addressed those of my own parish, and presented a 'Daily Bread' to each female, and a 'Sinner's Friend' to each male.

"All went home very happy.

"On Easter Sunday Fifteen new Communicants attended the Lord's Supper. 'Glory be to God!'"

In another manuscript book a register of the Communicants is given, commencing in 1840, by which it appears that from an average attendance of thirty or forty, which it had been in the first year of his ministry, the total number of Communicants had increased to nearly 170, and the average attendance to about 70; the largest number on any one occasion being 115.

The Sundays upon which the Sacrament of Baptism was administered, were marked by peculiar interest. No pains had been spared to impress upon each parent and sponsor the solemn responsibility which attached to this charitable work of theirs, in bringing little children to Christ's holy Baptism. And when the several parties assembled around the font, it was evident that the prayer of faith accompanied the outward administration of the sign. The happy view which Mr. Thornton took of the privilege which Christian parents enjoyed in this Sacrament, was felt by many who attended the Baptist Chapel; and some were led to adopt his views upon it, and he was not a little perplexed when it was proposed to him to baptize an adult, by immersion, in the

Church. We give the account of this interesting proceeding, as nearly as we can, in his own words.

In September 19, 1847, M. L. having expressed a great wish to be baptized by Mr. Thornton, not by sprinkling, but by immersion, he wrote to several of the clergy, from whose judgment he thought he might receive help; *viz.*, Dr. M'Neile, Mr. Goodhart, and others. From the latter he received a full account of a similar case in his own congregation, and by his advice he was chiefly guided.

He hired a large bath from town, which was placed in the chancel. The baptism took place after the Sermon; for, as it was a novel proceeding, he feared that the order of the congregation might be a little disturbed, had the Service been, as usual, after the Second Lesson.

He preached that afternoon on Exodus xii. 26, last clause. In his sermon he gave four answers to the question—"What means this Service?"

"1st. *It is an act of obedience to the command of Christ.* See Matt. xxviii. 19.

"It is quite plain that Baptism is a duty; that water is the element; that it is a means of grace; and that the command is binding to the end. The difference of opinion that has arisen in the Church of Christ, has consisted chiefly in two points.

"1st. As to the age of the recipients.

"2ndly. As to the quantity of water to be used.

All branches of the Christian Church, with the exception of a certain section of them called Baptists, agree in saying that both infants and adults may be recipients, and that it is immaterial whether baptism be performed by *pouring* water, or by *immersion*; or, in other words, by applying water to the person, or the person to the water. It is left by our own Church as a matter of choice (see Service), taking it for granted that the Ordinance remains the same in the two cases. I am therefore quite willing to perform it either way, according to the wish of the recipients, whether to adult or to infants, and I beg all parents who have any scruples on the subject, to have their children immersed, according to the undoubted intention of our Church.

"2dly. *It represents our union with Christ in his death and resurrection.* See Rom. vi. 3; Col. ii. 12.

"3rdly. *It is a seal of the Covenant of Grace.* We have a picture of what God's grace is in Ezek. xvi. 3—6.

"What Circumcision was to those under the law of Moses, that Baptism is to us.

"4thly. *It is a pledge of a better Resurrection.* See 1 Cor. xv. 29. The soldiers of Christ are falling daily. New ones must press into the ranks, and fight in their stead."

After the sermon, the young woman, neatly dressed in white, stood by the bath. A small ladder of steps had been made, which she, at the right time, mounted, and then descended into the water. Mr. Thornton held her hands while she bent backwards, quite under the water. She then came up out of the water, and descended the steps again, while a cloak was thrown round her, and she retired into the vestry.

The Baptists in Wendover and the neighbourhood were very much surprised to hear of this baptism by immersion, and several persons came from places round Wendover, to hear the particulars.

The following memorandum gives the account of a convert.

"*May* 3, 1843.—Died, W. M., aged 20, after lingering consumption.

"1838, was confirmed, and hopeful.

"1840, in Dec. went to Mr. S—'s service; lived there till May, 1842, when his health failing, he returned home. I once saw him standing with G. R., &c. I advised him to quit their company, which he did. In Nov. 1842, he joined the Communion, and came four times. He died in peace, having kept his bed one week. I preached his funeral sermon on Zech. iii. 2, 'Is not this a brand,' &c."

## CHAPTER VIII.

**Habit of Prayer—Preaching—Notes of Sermons—Parochial System —Method—Regularity—Address at Clerical Meeting.**

THE last six years of his ministry were marked by a very manifest growth in grace and experience; and although no material change was made in the system of his ministry, he was continually urging on the work of holiness. Instead of giving a consecutive narrative of events, we shall endeavour to present a a comprehensive view of his ministry from the information and suggestions communicated by his beloved fellow-labourers, Rev. Mr. Rowton, Mr. Silver, and Mr. Walton.

1. His habit of prayer.

It would give but a very imperfect idea of his devotional habits, to say that he spent a considerable portion of every day in secret prayer. Few persons ever visited him in his study, or received a visit from him, who were not invited to "kneel down and

pray." And in these prayers he manifested a spirit of the most entire child-like confidence. His petitions were short and fervent, couched in the most simple language, pleading the promises of God in the words of Scripture, and invariably particularizing the special wants and circumstances of every individual present; nothing seemed to escape him. If in a cottage or farm-house, he would specify every member of the family. It happened once that a servant-girl who was in the room heard her name brought before the throne of grace; the effect produced upon her mind was never effaced. On one occasion he was visiting upon Lee Common, in company with Mr. Walton, when they entered a cottage where an old man of bad character had died suddenly during the night, leaving a widow, a family of children and grandchildren, all living together in a state of awful ungodliness. Many of them were present. Mr. Thornton addressed them in his usual kind, earnest, and sententious way. "Well, poor old man! He's gone—cut down in a moment in his sins. It's too late for him to ask for mercy now. But—" after a pause, in which his countenance expressed the depth of feeling which was passing within—he added, "You are not gone. It's not too late for YOU. Come, my friends, kneel down with me, and let us cry for mercy while we have time. They all

knelt down on the brick floor, and he put up an earnest prayer for the survivors. The prayer was heard. The old woman has now a cottage lecture every week in that very room, and the voice of prayer and praise ascends to heaven, where once little else was heard but the murmurs of discontent and the profanity of the drunkard. The widow not only loves the means of grace, but has found mercy at the foot of the cross. But Mr. T. was not satisfied with praying for the sick whom he visited. If deaf or aged, he would beg them to repeat the words after him, and would adapt the petitions so as to put them in the singular number into the mouth of the person with whom he was joining in prayer. Thus he has been heard by the narrator teaching a bed-ridden person to repeat after him—"I am, O Lord, an aged sinner, a poor old woman," &c.; and used to say that he found this a means of keeping up attention and awakening thought. It was, however, attended with some difficulties, for he has often referred to the case of a very self-righteous old man with whom he had prayed in this way, and who had put to almost every sentence a very audible Amen, until he used the words, "O Lord, I am a poor wicked sinner," upon which he stopped him, saying, "*I can't quite say so much as that, Sir!*"

2. His Preaching.

Bishop Reynolds has said, that Jesus Christ ought to be the gem shining on the face of every sermon. This was the main feature of Mr. Thornton's addresses from the pulpit. His heart was full of love to his Saviour, and his sermons were supplied from that overflowing source. His style was peculiarly simple, adapted purposely to the habits of thought and expression which prevailed among the poorer and younger class of his hearers. The remark has been made by many, that he truly sympathised with the minds of his people. He knew the calibre of their apprehension, and never exceeded it in his language. From his untiring and constant intercourse with them, he could put himself into their situation and use their language, without losing the dignity and unction of his high office. To a stranger his style was open to criticism,—by those who knew him it was fully appreciated; and the best evidence of its adaptation to the people, is in the success which attended it. Without any attempt at eloquence, his sermons were always plain, interesting, and forcible. If as compositions they did not display an extensive range of reading or of argument, they bore the clearest marks of Scriptural research, patient meditation, and much prayer. A course of sermons preached upon the 110th Psalm, previous to the administration of the Sacrament, will be remembered by those who

heard them, as illustrating this remark. A stranger, residing in the neighbourhood of Leighton, about ten miles distant from Wendover, having heard the first, walked over on the Sundays when the subject was resumed, in order that he might hear the whole course. From another course, upon the 23rd Psalm, we give one specimen in order to shew the mind of the preacher before the sermon was delivered, and the effect of the discourse upon one of those who heard it. In a letter to a parishioner unable through illness to attend Church, Mr. Thornton wrote upon the Saturday—

"Vicarage, May 27, 1848.

"'Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied unto you' (Ps. xxiii. 6, 1st clause), is our sweet subject for to-morrow.

"I propose to show—1st. The Assurance;—2nd. Its ground.

"1st. *The assurance.* 'Surely goodness,' &c. What blessings are here! not money, riches, health, fame, &c., but *goodness* and *mercy*. 'Goodness' is the attribute which does good to us as *men*; 'mercy' is the attribute which pardons us as *sinners*; or, goodness may include all *temporal*, and mercy all *spiritual* blessings.

"'They shall follow me,' like some river in a wilderness (see 1 Cor. x. 4), which travels by the side

of the traveller, or like two kind angels who minister to the 'heirs of salvation.' Does this mean that the believer will be exempt from trials? Oh no; but all these are goodness (see Rom. viii. 28; Ps. xxv. 10.) Is not the physician good when he administers medicine? Is not the Father good when he chastens the child? Is not the tempest good? Does it not bestir the stagnant atmosphere, disperse the unwholesome vapours, and make the sun himself appear more clear? Even so the trials of this passing life rouse the slumbering Christian, and often bring him a sunshine of peace. There is 'goodness and mercy' in them. They are blessings, not curses; See Heb. xii. 5, &c.

"2nd. Let us consider *The ground of this assurance.* 'Surely,' &c. It is not for the impenitent sinner, hypocrite, or self-righteous. There is no assurance for them (Deut. xxviii. 63, &c,); but to the believer in Christ Jesus, 'God is faithful;' Jesus lives 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' With these promises the believer may rejoice and say with David, 'Surely goodness and mercy,' &c.

"Pray for me.

"Ever yours in the Lord,

"S. THORNTON."

The following notes were written from memory by one who heard the sermon.

"David's assurance of God's care over him as long as life shall last.—(Ps. xxiii. 6.)

"I. The assurance expressed.

"II. To whom it belongs.

"1. *The assurance expressed.*

"The Psalmist had no doubt. He says, 'Surely;' he looks forward in faith; he gave vent to his feelings in the words of our text. You can tell a man's feelings by his words, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The Psalmist here specifies *two* blessings most needful and appropriate for every sinner—'goodness and mercy;' goodness, that shall supply him when he is in *want*, and mercy, that shall forgive him when he *sins*: goodness following to provide, and mercy following to pardon. Goodness and mercy shall follow me: it seems to express *God following his people* in this wilderness. Goodness and mercy are here regarded by David like two ministering angels commissioned to attend him in his earthly pilgrimage; the name of the one is *goodness*, and the name of the other is *mercy: they* shall accompany him, not only in the *sunshine*, but also in the *lowering storm*; they shall follow him to his latest moments.

"The Christian does not blind his eyes to this fact, that he should have no sorrows; he must encounter losses, crosses, bereavements, sickness, *death*. In

the *world* ye shall have tribulation, but in *me* ye shall have peace. He keeps all these afflictions steadily in view. Let those of you who are in affliction honour them; they are the medicines of thy Heavenly Father; goodness and mercy are in them all; they will effect thy cure. God's afflictive dealings are proofs of his goodness and mercy.

"2. *To whom it belongs.*

"In speaking of this, I must first say to whom it does not belong. It does not belong to the *sinner;* 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' When the world slips from under *their feet,* they have *no God* to go to, *no Saviour to rest upon,* no heaven for their home. Neither is this assurance for the *self-righteous.* This assurance is for the weakest, the humblest believer in Jesus Christ; to those who have laid their sins on Jesus, all the promises are 'Yea,' and 'Amen.' We cannot take up these words in our name, it is *only* through *Him* who loved us while we were sinners, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Dear brethren, would you taste this goodness and mercy, lay hold on Christ; now is the day of salvation. Does the believer stand in doubt? here are promises of guidance and direction. 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths;' 'I will guide thee with my counsel.' Does the believer

mourn over sin? here are promises of pardon and sanctification. 'Come now, and let us reason together;' 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.'"

In the delivery of his sermons his characteristic was earnestness; he was not violent in action, but there was a force and vigour of manner which denoted that he was commissioned to convey a message to perishing sinners, which, as a sinner himself, he valued above everything in the world. If he were speaking of sin, he spoke as one who knew its burthen; if of death, as one who had often thought of eternity; if of the temptations of daily life, as one who was no stranger to them. In dealing with local occurrences, if of sufficient importance, he would carefully weigh them in the balances of the sanctuary, and apply them practically in illustration of the great truths of Scripture. Thus, upon the occasion of a General Election, which had created unusual excitement in Wendover, and much party spirit had been displayed in the course of the canvass, Mr. Thornton preached from 2 Pet. i. 10, "Make *your* calling and election sure." At the close of the sermon he was describing *how* a sinner, by simply coming unto Jesus, might be saved, "and it only remained for him

to tell them *when* that sinner could be saved. Immediately! not one moment must be lost! Do you think the successful candidate would have succeeded if he had delayed his canvass until the day before the election? No: we all feel he would not; and we know that for the last two months he has been busily engaged in securing votes, and has not left a stone unturned to gain his purpose. Now, my friends, apply this to *our* subject. Here is our election, pardon, sanctification, peace, and eternal life—every blessing for time and eternity; but remember, now is the accepted time. To-day, if ye will hear his voice; harden not your hearts."

At one of his Sunday Evening Lectures, he was speaking of imputed righteousness; and having laid down the great principle upon which he delighted to dwell,—"*Thou, Jesus, art my righteousness; I am thy sin; Thou hast taken on thyself what was mine; Thou hast given me what is thine;*" he added,—

"I was this morning driving in my gig to Aylesbury to preach at Trinity Church, and on the road overtook a poor fatigued and foot-sore beggar. I stopped and told him to get up into the carriage. The man looked at me with surprise, and hesitated. But upon my assuring him I was in earnest, he

with some difficulty ascended the vehicle. When he was seated, I said, 'Why did you delay to get into the gig when I asked you first?' The poor man, with a look of shame, replied, 'Because I did not think myself fit to sit beside such a gentleman as you, in my dirty clothes.' This gave me an opportunity of explaining to him that sin defiled the soul far more in the sight of God, than filthy rags do the body in the sight of a gentleman; and that Jesus invites sinners to come as they are, to receive cleansing and clothing from Him, without money and without price.

Mr. Thornton kept a register of his Sermons, in which not only the number and date were carefully noted at the time; but, in a column left for the purpose, remarks were added as any result from the Sermon came to his knowledge. The register contains a list of 999 Sermons. He preached twice afterwards. The text of the 999th (the last entry in the book) is 1 Pet. iii. 7, "The end of all things." We shall give some extracts from this book, with the notes of his first Sermon at Wendover, and of the 1000th, preached on New Year's Day, 1850.*

* Rev. F. Silver, in his Funeral Sermon, gives the following instance of Mr. Thornton's humility.—"He was remarking that he had just preached a thousand Sermons, and added, 'On looking over them, I am grieved to find so little of Christ in them.'" (p. 6.)

## *Extracts from Sermon Register.*

"No 47. Luke viii. 18. This Sermon blessed to W. V. τῳ θεῳ δοξα.

"No. 67. John xviii. 31, 32. Mrs. Butler felt this Sermon.

"No. 273. Jan. 24, 1841. Eph. vi. 11. F. F. mentioned this in October, 1844.

"No. 522. Ps. lxxxiv. 10. E. H. spoke of this after.

"No. 539. Micah vi. 9. After seven deaths in one month, Mrs. M. spoke of this.

"No. 632. H. D. fell down dead in the Packhorse after Lecture.

"No. 634. Hos. xiii. 9. Mr. P. cut his throat, but was spared.

"No. 635. Sunday after the fair, when I delivered William Cawdery to the cage for drunkenness. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. 'The unrighteous shut out.'

"No. 661. Ezek. xxi. 9, 10. C. said this Sermon was too severe. E. T. dated her first deep concern about her soul to it.

"No. 663. Neh. xiii. 15. After twelve publicans agreed to close their houses.

"No. 665. Luke x. 21. This Sermon was the means of awakening H. C. τῳ θεῳ δοξα.

"No. 945. Josh. xxiii. 15. J. H. felt remarks on heart idols.

"No. 947. Judges vi. vii. J. K. was interested in this Sermon.

"March, 1846. Sermons upon sacrifices. This course was interesting only to a few.

"Passion Week. Matt. xxvi. 30—35. About 100 present every evening. Mrs. J. felt this Sermon.

"James iv. 13—15, was blessed to two persons; 1 Sam. xx. 11, 12, to another, who wrote to him about it."

Mr. Thornton frequently received letters from persons who had profited by his ministry; the following extract is a specimen.

"REV. SIR,—Pardon the liberty of my presuming to address you. And be pleased to accept this as a token of gratitude for the kindness I have experienced from you. But more than mere personal kindness, you have been the instrument, in the hand of the Almighty, of redeeming my soul from the dominion of sin and the power of the wicked one. Could I express to you the joy, consolation, and peace, I now possess in believing, I would; but I am unable to do so. I feel it my duty to thank you, and as my heart fills so much when we meet, I write what I should be unable personally to speak to you," &c.

*Notes of First Sermon preached at Wendover, Nov. 5, 1837; being No. 31 in the register.*

"'And I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.' (Rom. xv. 29.)

"St. Paul had never seen the Christians at Rome. He wrote this Epistle to them when he was on a journey to Jerusalem; but, not content with writing to them, he made request, if by any means now at

length he might have a prosperous journey by the will of God, to come unto them. This we find in the beginning of the Epistle; and it seems as if the desire had been uppermost in his mind while he wrote; for he alludes to it again at the end of the Epistle, and says, 'I am sure that when I come,' &c. I feel that my circumstances are somewhat similar. For although I have before visited this place, I have never seen the faces of many among you in the flesh; but I trust I can say of you before God and man, as holy Paul said of the Romans, 'I thank my God for you all, that your faith is spoken of.' Yes! I have heard of your faith, and of the love which you have to all the Saints, and I have now for these five months longed to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me; *and though my times are in God's hands,* yet I have felt 'sure that when I come, I shall come in the fulness,' &c. I need not stay to show you how this was true of the Apostle; that he did go among them in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ. Although he went as a prisoner, bound with a chain, we know, from Acts xxviii. 23, that this was the case.

"I will endeavour to shew you the meaning of the text, and will exhibit what was to be,—

"I. *The manner of the Apostle's going to Rome.*
"II. *The certainty of his thus coming.*

"I. *The manner of the Apostle's coming.*—'I shall come in the fulness,' &c. It is to be remarked that St. Paul here, as in other places, multiplies words to express his meaning fully; as if one expression would not do. It is not 'I shall come in the Gospel of Christ,' but, 'In the *fulness* of the *blessing*,' &c. It were enough for him to promise to bring the Gospel, but he also describes the character of the Gospel. It is a *blessed* Gospel, and it is a *blessing* Gospel. It is more still. It is a full Gospel, and full of blessing. It blesses him that gives, and him that receives. Oh! how can I explain these things? It is the good news of Christ; that is, the good news that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I bring you nothing new, but that which is written in the word of God as with a pen of iron, and handed down from generation to generation. I come, not with excellency of speech or of man's wisdom, for I have determined to know nothing among you but Christ, and him crucified. But lest any should undervalue this, and set light by the Gospel, let them know that it contains a blessing; 'I shall come in the *blessing* of the Gospel of Christ.' It was just thus that St. Peter preached

to the Jewish Sanhedrim, when brought before them. He said, 'God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless *you.*' This is the first object and design of the Gospel. *It is to bless.* Prov. iii. 17. Yes, In the religion of Jesus, as it is set forth in the services and prayers of the Church of England—there is a large blessing. But it is no common blessing. It is a *full* blessing. 'I shall come in the *fulness* of the blessing,' &c. There is no blessing half so full.

"I feel, my brethren, that I am sent by God. I am indeed but an earthen vessel, but he has promised to put the treasure of the Gospel in this vessel, and it shall be full and running over.

"Brethren, there is another thing yet to be noticed, which is this:

"II. The certainty that he should come in this manner. '*I am sure,*' &c. It is well worth observing that Paul had said just before, in the 24th verse, '*I trust* to be brought on my way by you.' Here it is, 'I am *sure.*' Why is this? Why this difference? Why '*trust*' in one case, and *certainty* in the other? There is a good reason. He putteth trust (that is, hope) only in man, but certainty in God. Man may disappoint; God cannot. Man may be unable; *God is not.* Paul dares to exercise faith in God, and to say, 'I am *sure,*' &c. And I

trust I can say so too. Yes, 'I am sure.' Why? How can I say so? I have the promise of God. Paul went not in his own strength, neither do I. If I did, I should have no hope at all. All would be darkness, and gloominess, and misery, and wretchedness. But I have a bright hope before me; for 'I am sure that I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.' You may perhaps say, What makes you so sure? It is the promise of God makes me sure. 'Certainly I will be with you,' is my assurance. I come not among you in my own strength, but in the strength of the Lord of hosts. We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

Application—The duty of the people. If I have a great duty to fulfil, you have a great duty also. And while I desire to express my responsibility, I would seek to impress your responsibility on you. It is expressed in the words of the following text: 'Strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.'

*Notes of a Sermon preached on New Year's Day,* 1850.

"'My times are in thy hand.'" (Ps. xxxi. 15.)

"This Psalm is an instance of mingled experience. Of *Confidence*, 1, 3, 5, 6—8, 14, 15, 19, 21, 23, 24. Of *distress*, 2, 4, 9, 10—13, 16—18, 22.

"In the opening of the New Year it is good to examine such a subject, that we may gain confidence in our God.

"We will consider—

"1st. The Christian's Experience.

"2ndly. The Christian's Confidence.

"3rdly. The Christian's Duty.

"1st. The Christian's Experience. 'My times,' &c. These are *ordinary* and *extraordinary* times.

"*Ordinary* times, in which the believer differs not from the world, as birth, life, death.

"*Extraordinary* times, which are peculiar to himself. See Prov. xiv. 10.

"1st. *Times of trial, outward* and *inward.*

"1. Outward trials may befal the Christian in his health, friends, circumstances, persecutions. Heb. xi. 36, &c.

"2. Inward trials, affecting the soul chiefly.

"The pangs of the New Birth!

"The conflict between grace and sin! Rom. vii. 19.

"The lusts of the flesh and spirit! Gal. v. 17.

"A man must feel it, to know it!

"The sharpest of all, when the Lord hides his face. When the soul has backslidden, or lost the sense of the Father's love! Job. xxiii. 8, &c.

"2ndly. *Times of joy*—Outward and Inward.

"1. Outward prosperity and happiness is sometimes given to the believer here below, as Job. xxix. 6—18. So also 1 Tim. iv. 8.

"2. Inward peace and prosperity of soul! Rom. v. 1. Heb. iv. 9. Ps. cxix. 165. Isa. xxvi. 3.

"But the time of rest is not yet. Deut. xii. 9. It is future. This rest will be first at the moment of death. Rev. xiv. 13. Isa. lvii. 1. There will be rest from toil.

"Secondly and perfectly this rest will be at the coming of Christ. 2 Thess. i. 7. Then will be the rest after victory. Then will be the rest of satisfied love.

"II. The Christian's Confidence, 'My times are in thy hand."

"1. He considers *the appointment* of all events. 'My times are in *thine hand.*'

"No such thing as blind chance! God is a God of Providence! This was illustrated to Ezekiel, by God, under the image of wheels, i. 15, to the end. See Ps. cxlv. 13—16. Matt. vi. 26. Behold the fowls, &c. Matt. vi. 28. Consider the lilies. Then you find, ver. 30, The application,—Wherefore, &c.

"2. He considers that all events are *under God's directions.* 'My times, &c.' 'All things serve Thee.' See Ps. cxlix. 8, &c.

"If the furnace be heated sevenfold, it is by the king's order. If the tale of bricks be increased, it is by the king's decree. How much more, then, does the King of kings rule and order all things in heaven and in earth.

"3. He considers all events are in *God's control.* 'My times,' &c.

"Trials and troubles are compared to *waves* and *floods.* Ps. xciii. 3, 4. When they are the most boisterous, God can stop their rage. Job. xxxviii. 11. See Ps. lxxvi. 10.

"So it was with Job, who, though tried to the uttermost by Satan, both inwardly and outwardly, yet was preserved through it all, and brought forth from his trials purified. Wicked men and Satan, even in their proud rage, are under the control of God. Pharaoh, and Pontius Pilate, were made to glorify God and show forth his power.

"How beautiful is Hymn 39, 5th verse, in our collection :—

> "'Times the tempter's power to prove,
> Times to taste a Saviour's love,
> All must come, and last and end,
> As shall please my heavenly friend.'*

* Bickersteth's Collection.

"III. The Christian's duty and privilege is,—

"1. *To place all in God's hands.* 'My times, &c.' See David's privilege in verse 5 of this Psalm. It was fully true of Jesus, Luke xxiii. 40. So Stephen, Acts vii. 59. So Paul, 2 Tim. i. 12. If the Great Head and his members thus committed their souls for eternity into the Father's hand, how much more should we commit all other lesser things. Yes, beloved brethren, 'Cast thy burden,' &c. Ps. lv. 22, and again, 'Be careful,' &c. Phil. iv. 6, 7.

"2. *To leave all in God's hands.* 'My times,' &c. Observe the verse before the text, (14th). It was the Psalmist's sure trust in God that enabled him to say, 'My times,' &c. Never sit in judgment on God, saying, why am I thus? but be as Ps. cxxxi. 2.

"'His love in times past forbids me to think,
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through.'

"'Sweet to lie passive in his hands,
And know no will but His.'

"'*To be satisfied to leave all in God's hands.*'

"This is the highest step! Pleased with all that pleases Him! Wait the end! John xiii. 7.

"'His purposes are ripening fast,
Unfolding every hour.'

"Let us, my dear friends, take this text as a motto for this year 1850. *We know not what times are prepared for us in this year. Whether of trial, or of joy; whether of life, or death.* In His hands let us leave all."

### 3.—*Parochial System.*

The reader will already have seen the principle upon which the parochial system was carried out at Wendover. Direct, methodical intercourse with every individual, and a classification according to age and station, with appropriate means of grace for each, were the two leading features of Mr. Thornton's ministry. A good memory, and a strong, vigorous habit of body, enabled him to keep his engagements with punctuality. And his strict attention to the least and minutest details of his work, spread an influence over those who co-operated with him in the different departments of labour which can only be appreciated by those who knew and felt it. One of his friends writes:—"Numerous as were his engagements, I never knew him forget *one* among the multiplicity of little things which many would call trifles. Nothing was a trifle to him which was in any way connected with the one great work to which he had consecrated every energy of his mind and body." Another writes:—"He seem-

ed to have a great store of practical knowledge, and knew how to use it. Nothing escaped his attention; and I might almost say, he never forgot anything. If I wanted anything remembered, however trifling, I committed it to Mr. Thornton, and it was sure to be all right. Most things were done in the quickest and best way, and it was astonishing how easily a multitude of little matters would be dispatched, and, apparently, his quietness of mind undisturbed. It seemed he could have to do with many secular things without being secularized by them. Much of all this arose, perhaps, from constitutional activity, and much from the regularity and method of all his habits, for every half-hour in the day seemed to be ticketed with its proper work; *but the chief cause must have been, that one so watchful unto prayer as he was, carried an unburthened and undistracted mind about with him.*"

These remarks seem to be necessary in giving a sketch of the many schemes which he had put into operation, because it might be thought that more was attempted than could reasonably be expected to succeed. But it must be remembered, that what is to many persons an effort, was to Mr. Thornton spontaneous. It was not the excitement of the moment, but the clear steady glow of a burning zeal.

It was an apt illustration of our Lord's words, "A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth that which is good."

On the 14th November, 1848, Mr. Thornton proposed the following subject for discussion at the monthly meeting of the Central Bucks Clerical Society:—"What are the best subsidiary means for teaching our people, and how are they to be used by us as ministers, so that we may be pure from the blood of all? (Acts xx. 17—35.)" And in the address which he made upon that occasion, marked as it was by peculiar humility, he reminded his brethren that the plans which he recommended were not only practical, but practicable; being the result of the experience of eleven years in a parish of two thousand souls.*

We give the address in his own words:—

"My dear Brethren in the Ministry,—I have ventured to propose this question, as a sequel to the last, viz. 'The Subject and Character of Preaching,' not because I feel equal to the task of opening it as it deserves:—its importance is so vast, that I am constrained to ask, 'Who is sufficient for these things?'

"The subject is the pastoral superintendence of a parish,—

* The Address was printed at the request of the Clergy, and published by Wertheim and Macintosh, 24 Paternoster Row, in a little tract, price 2d., entitled, "Remarks on the Pastoral Care of a Parish, by Spencer Thornton, M.A."

ἡ ἐπισύστασίς ἡ καθ' ἡμέραν, (2 Cor. xi. 28,) which Beza and Doddridge explain to mean, 'a tumult, or crowd of people, rising up against a man again and again, and ready to bear him down.'

"It leads us all to take a review of our ministry, which will, I am sure, force us to cry with Isaiah of old, 'Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.' (Isa. vi. 5.)

"For the sake of greater clearness, let us consider the subject in three parts:

"First—*The end in view;*—

"Secondly—*The best subsidiary means to the end;*—

"Thirdly—*The way to use those means.*

"1. THE END IN VIEW,—'THAT WE MAY BE PURE FROM THE BLOOD OF ALL MEN.'

"There appears to be an allusion to Ezek. xxxiii. where the prophet is called a watchman, whose duty it is to watch, and give warning, by blowing the trumpet; and it is added (v. 4,) 'Whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.' The 'blood' is for the life—the soul. If *it* be saved, all is saved!—if lost, all is lost!

"Our work is to warn and to win the souls of our people, to bring them unto Christ, and to keep them in Christ. Our ministry must, therefore, embrace all classes of our parishioners:—believers must be built up—enquirers must be instructed—the careless aroused—infidels convinced—the young taught—and every soul must be left without excuse; so that none, at the day of judgment, when they and we shall stand before our Judge, shall be able to say to us, 'You never warned me, otherwise you might have saved me from an everlasting hell!—my blood be upon your head!'

"II. THE BEST SUBSIDIARY MEANS FOR TEACHING OUR PEOPLE.

"By 'subsidiary' of course we mean, subsidiary to preaching, which was considered at our last meeting, and which must ever be first, according to the apostolic charge,—(2 Tim. iv. 1,) 'I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word.'

"I shall confine myself to those means which are *spiritual*, and have a direct tendency to profit the souls of our people, —naming the public means before the more private ones.

"1st. *Familiar exposition of Scripture in a School-room or Cottage on a week-day afternoon or evening.*

"Such familiar expositions have the sanction of several of our bishops, and possess manifest advantages;—to ourselves, because they do not require so much preparation as set sermons—to our hearers, because they are shorter, and less formal, than the Church services; and the poor do not scruple to attend them in their working clothes. The beneficial results have been proved in numberless instances. They promote a social feeling in religious worship, so much to be desired: they impart to our people an acquaintance with large portions of the Bible: they tend to comfort tried believers in the midst of their secular cares and duties: to direct enquirers: to arouse the careless: and last, but not least, are calculated to win, rather than alienate, the affections of our people generally, to the scriptural articles and spiritual services of our Established Church. It is very desirable sometimes to substitute for these regular lectures an occasional meeting, to give information on Missionary matters at home and abroad, and to call forth the active sympathies of our people in behalf of those who are perishing for lack of knowledge. Every parish, however small, should have its Bible and Mis-

sionary Associations and Meetings. They have a most beneficial effect on our own people, in leading them to value their own mercies, and thus prove real means of grace. Many facts and anecdotes related at such seasons have never been forgotten.

"2nd. *Classes for the separate instruction of different ranks.*

"These are distinguished from the former, partly because they consist of smaller numbers, and partly because they are *conversational.* Of this kind are monthly meetings, where farmers and tradesmen search the sacred scriptures, together with the clergyman; and Dorcas meetings, where their wives and daughters meet to make clothes for the poor, while one member reads aloud some interesting religious book;—a hymn is sung; after which the clergyman explains a short passage of scripture, and closes with prayer. Also, Bible classes for Sunday-school teachers, domestic servants, and grown up girls; and classes to prepare catechumens for confirmation, and enquirers for the Lord's supper, are very useful.

"Besides these, it is important to form a class of labouring men; where all who can, read a verse each, while others sit by and listen to them and to the explanation of the clergyman. Some have told me they have learnt more in this way than in any other.

"There is another large class of our people who require a special effort to be made in their behalf; I mean drunkards and tiplers. They should be induced to abstain entirely from all intoxicating drinks, and encouraged to keep their pledge, by the formation of a total-abstinence society. Experience proves that they are not irreclaimable. I long to see my evangelical brethren directing and guiding this movement. (See Rom. xiv. 21; 1 Cor. viii. 13.)

"3rd. *Visiting the sick and whole from house to house.* (Acts xx. 20.)

"This is what the great Dr. Chalmers called the '*aggressive principle.*'—He thus defines it:—'The aggressive principle, then, is that in virtue of which I do not hold myself acquitted of the Christian duty which I owe to my fellow-creatures, merely by raising an apparatus of churches and schools, and saying, 'come in, if you will, here, and I am at my post if you choose to come to me; and if you won't come to your post, you are yourselves to blame.' This is very much what is done for the population in general; but unless you bring the aggressive principle to bear upon them, you need not expect them to come to you. There is something more necessary than a stationary apparatus. You must go forth to the people. If you were the dispenser of physical good things,—such as bread, butcher's-meat, and other things of the same nature,—there would be no necessity for setting up the aggressive principle,—the *attractive* principle would be sufficient to insure a demand for them; but I say you are the dispenser of that which has no charm for man, who is morally and spiritually dead, and therefore, you must go forth to him with the benefits of which you are the dispenser; and this is missionary work at a small distance. Don't think that it is necessary that you should travel thousands of miles, or that you have immense oceans to traverse, before you can engage in a missionary work. There are wretched creatures in many parts of this town, who are at as great a moral distance from the gospel, and from all its lessons, as if they had been born and lived all their days in the wilds of Tartary. Now, this is what I call a Home Mission, which essentially requires all which constitutes the virtue of self-denial in the missionary work.'*

"This *aggressive principle*,—this *missionary work*,—must be carried on steadily from day to day by the clergy them-

* "See his Address on Churches and Schools for the Working Classes.—December 27, 1837."

selves, if they wish to see their churches and school-rooms well attended; for it is an undoubted truism, that '*a house-going parson makes a church-going people.*'

"The *sick* claim our first attention. A list should be kept of their names. We should visit them as soon as we hear they are ill. It is a call of God to us to do so; it may be the time of mercy to their souls, for 'God often baits his grace with his providence,' as an old writer says. In sickness, the heart is generally tender and open to receive a kind visit from the clergyman: 'And a word spoken in due season, how good is it!'—(Prov. xv. 23.) It will prosper better if we have kneeled down before leaving our study, and prayed God to give us grace to speak and them to hear. It is desirable, if possible, to see the sick person *alone;* for although the relatives might also derive good, yet their presence generally makes the patient more reserved, and prevents us from using that plainness of speech, which is so necessary to draw out the heart in full confession to God.

"What a beautiful instance does John iv. give us of the tenderness of our Blessed Lord!—he did not bring the woman's sin to her remembrance, until 'the disciples were gone away into the city to buy meat.' (ver. 8.)

"When praying with dying persons, I have often found it good to pray in the first person, putting myself, as it were, in their place, thus: 'O God, I am a poor miserable sinner, pardon *me* for Jesus Christ's sake;' or, 'O God, for Jesus Christ's sake, give *me* thy Holy Spirit.'

"The visitation of the *whole* is quite as much binding upon us as that of the *sick*, by the vow which we took upon us at our ordination, when we promised 'to use both public and private monitions and exhortations as well to the sick as to the whole.' In doing this, we have to guard against indifference to their bodily wants and concerns; and on the other hand, against losing sight of that which is of greater moment

—the care of the soul. Every family in our parishes have their own concerns in which they are most interested—a world of their own. It is right we should visit them as a friend who enters into their joys and griefs, as Jesus and his apostles did; and yet we must not forget our chief errand, which is to save their souls. It is a good rule, never to pay a visit to our rich or poor neighbours without leaving behind us a verse of Scripture; or, at least, a *word* for God.

"We may inquire the cause of their absence from church or the Lord's Supper; talk of the sermons of the previous or following Sunday; exhort to family prayers, and offer to conduct them, especially if we have given notice of our visit before-hand, so that the members of the family be gathered together. I know one clergyman in the West of England who thus visits every family who will admit him, in the evening, and reads and prays with them once during the winter. The frequency of these visits to the whole must, of course, depend chiefly on the size of our parishes. Surely it were not too much to say, that in a moderate sized parish, we should call at every house, at least once a quarter.*

* "Since the meeting was held, I have been favoured with a letter from another member of the society, containing such a valuable suggestion on the best method of visiting our people, that I copy it verbatim:

"'It has appeared to me that the following mode of visiting was not mentioned; I mean this:—As a rule, to allot certain portions of the parish to each day in the week, and to visit them in those portions regularly on such days. Suppose a parish is divided into five districts —A, B, C, D, E. Take A on the two half-days, Monday and the day of the evening lecture; or allot two days to one, in order to cover extra visits, which are sure to be called for; then B on Tuesday; and so on. I think this preferable to going right through the parish from end to end, for these reasons; 1st. The minister will be regularly in every district of the parish once a week. Supposing he were to visit from one extreme point to another, he would take perhaps a month

"There is another most important way of holding ministerial intercourse with the whole, viz. by inviting them to come, one by one, and talk with us in our studies. There is something solemn in entering the clergyman's study for private conversation on the things of God, and for prayer. Such a season would be long remembered.

"The habit of this daily visiting among our people will be one of our greatest helps in preaching. It will accustom us to their ways of thought and action, and them to ours, in some measure: it will open their hearts towards us and our message; and, above all, it will make us acquainted with the state of their soul, so that we may not draw a bow at a venture from the pulpit, but direct the arrows skilfully. Our ministry will cease to be general, and will become particular, suited to our own place and people. If we are in earnest, we shall seize every opportunity of speaking a word privately to all, wherever we meet them; in the field, barn, or garden: in the street or highway, as well as in the cottage and chamber.

"*4th. Daily and Sunday Schools.*

"The Divine command is, 'Feed my lambs.' The large proportion which the young bear in every parish, and the influence which they will, in a few years, have upon society, as parents and masters, entitle them to our careful attention.

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or two months before he would return to the point from which he set out: and during that time he would be out of sight of the people with whom he commenced his rounds. 2nd. The minister will have every district in the parish brought before his mind once every week. Thus he will be enabled to present the whole before God in prayer in a more precise and lively manner every week. 3rd. The work will be easier. He will not have to run from one distant point to another on irregular visits,—to houses in different districts.'—I can speak from experience of the beneficial effects of this plan, and therefore heartily commend it to the notice of my brethren."

To establish schools, and to superintend them, is the great remedy; taking care to appoint over them godly teachers possessed of as large a share of knowledge as we can obtain with the funds at our command. In rural districts, I have found mixed schools for boys and girls, under a good master or mistress, work well. It is very important to open and superintend *improved* Dame schools, conducted by intelligent and pious cottagers, which will almost support themselves by the payments of the scholars. This is a plan which seems better calculated to promote religious education than any other, *in the scattered hamlets* which abound in this country. Several of these have been established by the active zeal of the excellent Mrs. R. of A.

"A night-school should be opened for farming lads, at least four evenings in the week, to instruct them in the Scriptures, reading, writing, and the rudiments of arithmetic and geography. The school-master should have the sole management of this school, and receive the pence. In case there is no master, voluntary teachers may be found to do it, under the eye of the clergyman.

"It is of the utmost importance that the clergyman should *superintend* the Sunday school, and should catechise the children in the Church Catechism or some portion of scripture, after they have committed it to memory. This may be done in school; or, if practicable, in church after the second lesson; but it should not, in my opinion, take the place of the sermon *every* Sunday afternoon.

"As soon as the children are fifteen or sixteen years old, they should be promoted to a Bible class, which might meet once or twice every Sunday; or, if serious, they might be employed as teachers of junior classes. These young persons will thus be training for confirmation, and will continue attached members of our church, instead of filling the ranks of dissent.

"*5th. Lending Books and Tracts.*

"A good lending library is a valuable appendage to a parish, if easy books be chosen. The circulation of plain tracts, once a week or fortnight, promotes a spirit of reading, and often leads to the searching of the Scriptures. The tracts of the Religious Tract Society are sound in doctrine, but some of them are too difficult for general distribution. There are many other series of most useful ones; such as, the Barham, Kelso, Kirby Lonsdale, Watton, and Wonston Tracts, from which a judicious selection may be made. There is also a new series lately published, entitled, 'Tracts for Railway-men,'* which are admirably suited for agricultural labourers. Among young men there is a great thirst for books, which has led to the early shutting of shops, and opening of young men's Institutes. It is better where such things are established, that they should be watched and directed by the clergyman; in order that he may make them, not curses, but blessings to the rising generation. This he may do, also, by giving occasional lectures on natural and moral philosophy, and on missions.

"*6th. Writing Ministerial Letters.*

"For this we have the example of the Apostles in all their epistles: and still more, of our Lord himself, in the second and third chapters of the Revelations.

"Sometimes a letter will reach those who are inaccessible to other means. Thus, the careless sinner, who absents himself from every public means of grace, and refuses the visits of the minister, may be reached. We may deal more plainly with his conscience than he would bear if we stood with him face to face. In this way, the sick and dying, who cannot bear the fatigue of a very short visit, may be refreshed with a

* "All the above-named Series may be had of Messrs. Wertheim & Macintosh, 24, Paternoster Row.

little note containing a few passages of Scripture; and thus, also, the tears of the mourner may be wiped away. Besides this, we may keep up a very valuable influence over our spiritual children when removed to a distance from us, such as many of our young people in service, by sending them an occasional word of advice and encouragement, with a tract enclosed, in a short christian letter.

"III. THE WAY TO EMPLOY THESE MEANS.

"1*st. By cultivating holiness in ourselves and in our families.*

"This is of the first importance. The apostolic rule is, 'Take heed to thyself.' (1 Tim. iv. 16.) We must never forget that we are men as well as ministers,—that we are sinners; we must therefore keep our own vineyard, as well as that of others; we must search the Scriptures for ourselves, that our souls may grow thereby. Then we shall be able to bring out of our treasury things new and old. We must be men of prayer, living in a heavenly atmosphere. Besides this, we must rule our own house well, having our children and servants 'in subjection, with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God!)' (1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.) The clergyman's spiritual state is generally the pulse whereby you may judge of the state of his household and parish; as a quaint old writer once said, 'When it is well with me, it is well with my wife; when it is well with my wife, it is well with the children; when it is well with the children, it is well with the servants; and when it is well with the servants, it is well with the parish.' How important, then, for us to walk closely with God! From this will flow holiness of life, on which our whole usefulness depends. 'Your sermon,' exclaims the devoted M'Cheyne, 'on the Sabbath, lasts but an hour or two; your life preaches all the week. Remember, ministers are standard-bearers. Satan aims his fiery darts at

them. If he can only make you a covetous minister, or a lover of pleasure, or a lover of praise, or a lover of good eating, then he has ruined your ministry for ever. 'Ah! let him preach on fifty years, he will never do me any harm.'* —The world will endure our evangelical doctrine, if we will conform to them in a worldly life. 'Take heed,' therefore, 'to yourselves.' (Acts xx. 28.)'

"2nd. *By a wise division and diligent improvement of our time.*

"The apostolic charge to the Ephesians and Colossians,—'Redeeming the time,'—applies with peculiar force to Ministers. Nothing can be well done without order and regularity. Every duty should have its proper time, and should, if possible, be done in that time.

"On the importance of punctuality, Cecil, in his 'Remains,' says, 'Method is the very hinge of business; and there is no method without punctuality.' Much wisdom is needed in making our plans, and more steadiness in following them up patiently from day to day. There are seasons which require more than usual activity in our Master's work; such as a few weeks preparatory to confirmation, and the long evenings of the winter months, when farm lads and labourers may be gathered together to the lectures, classes, and schools. I have a high authority for saying, that every clergyman in a moderate-sized parish should devote four hours daily to direct pastoral work among his people. At the same time, we must ever bear in mind, that it matters not how much *time* we give, as how much *work* we do for God in the time. There is great force in the following advice:—'Remember, that in all this you have a *real* work to do. Let this thought be always with you. Go out to visit in your parish, not because you ought to spend so much time in visiting your

* "Memoir of the Rev. R. M. M'Cheyne—Sermon xi. page 365."

people, but because they have souls; and you have committed to you, feeble as you are, the task of saving them, in Christ's strength, from everlasting burnings. When you talk with them, beware of the dreamy listlessness which would decently fill up some ten minutes with kindness, good words; an enquiry as to their families, their work, their health; ending, possibly, with a formal prayer; but say to yourself, *Now must I get into this heart some truth from God!* Be *real* with them; strike as one that would make a dent upon their shield of hardness; yea, and smite through it to their heart of hearts.'*

"3rd. *By using all the helpers we can obtain.*

"Should any one, after reading the subsidiary means recommended above, ask, How can one man do all this work alone? I answer, We are not alone. We ought not to be alone. In every well-ordered parish, a laborious, evangelical Incumbent, with a Curate of like mind, will generally find persons able and willing to aid him by their personal efforts and exertions. The love of Christ will constrain some of them to become district visitors; others, Sunday school teachers; others, collectors for the Church Missionary, Jews', and Bible Societies; while even young men may be found willing, after the hours of work or business, to teach a few of their neighbours to read or write, in their own cottages. This system of lay agency is one great secret of the spread of dissent and popery. Why may we not employ it in a better cause, in a purer Church? By thus enlisting the members of our congregations, we do good to themselves, by making their religion more active and healthy, and benefit numbers who could scarcely be reached at all without this additional agency.

"4th. *By expecting success in our Ministry.*

* "The Bishop of Oxford's Ordination Charge, 1846; page 16."

"Success is the rule under a living ministry; want of success is the exception. 'The want of ministerial success,' says Robinson, 'is a tremendous circumstance, never to be contemplated without horror.' Our people are of two kinds; we must look for success among both. 1st. *The Lord's people.* They are 'the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.' What an argument is here to quicken all our energies! 'Oh,' saith one of the ancient doctors, 'if Christ had committed to my keeping one spoonful of His blood in a fragile glass, how curiously would I preserve it, and how tender would I be of that glass! If, then, he have committed to me the purchase of his blood, should I not as carefully look to my charge?'* It is not enough that they be in Christ, unless they *abide* in Him. In order to this, we must go in and out among them, as Paul did, 'confirming the souls of the disciples.' (Acts xiv. 22.) We must be like 'Barnabas, the son of consolation,' (Acts iv. 36,) and like Apollos, 'who helped them much which had believed through grace,' (Acts xviii. 27.) Hence the importance of separate means of grace for the pious members of our congregation, such as the communicants' meeting, which affords us a precious opportunity of addressing to them words of special comfort and direction. 2nd. *The great mass of the unconverted.* We must look for success in them also. We must leave the ninety-and-nine, and go after the one sheep that was lost. We must leave our home, our fire-side, our comforts, our bed, our ease, our all, to feed lost souls. The Lord of glory left heaven for this; it is enough for the disciple to be as his Master. It is said of Alleine, that 'he was infinitely and insatiably greedy of the conversion of souls.' Rutherford wrote to his dear people, 'My witness is above, that your heaven would be two heavens to me, and the salvation of you all as two sal-

* "See Baxter's Reformed Pastor, page 199. 4th Ed. (Simpkin, Marshall, & Co.)"

vations to me.' Let us not be satisfied without *conversion*. We shall often find that there is a shaking among the dry bones—a coming together bone to his bone;—skin and flesh come upon them, but no breath in them. But let us not be satisfied without this, remembering that 'a moral sinner will lie down in the same hell with the vilest.'*

"5th. *By much prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on ourselves and our people.*

"God has said, 'Them that honour me I will honour.' (1 Sam. ii. 30.) Whenever, therefore, we honour God, by teaching our people a full and free gospel, without reserve, publicly and from house to house, He will honour us as he did His apostles, 'with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,' (1 Pet. i. 12.) Which of us has not been struck with the contrast between the effect of their ministry, compared with that of our Lord's? How is it that we read in Acts ii. that 3000 were converted in one day, when in Acts i. we read of about 120 as the result of Christ's ministry during three years? Is it not because the Holy Ghost was poured out on the day of Pentecost? Is not this the key to unlock the Acts of the Apostles? It was the dispensation of the Spirit: and this is what we need now. Yes, dear brethren we can do nothing without the outpouring of the Spirit. 'We may in every respect be exemplary ministers; but *this* want is fatal. We may be reverent and rubrical in our church services; kind, and accessible, and diligent pastors; we may multiply our institutions, our provident funds, our clothing clubs;—may feed the hungry, and cover the naked;—our parochial machinery may be complete in all its parts, and perfect in its operation;—we may map our parishes; our statistics may embrace every man, every woman, every child of every family, in every street, and every lane, and every

* "M'Cheyne's Memoirs, p. 365.

court;'* but if he want this, we want all: for this is the Word of the Lord,—'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts,' (Zech. iv. 6.) Also, 'Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of,' (Ezek. xxxvi. 37.) We must, therefore, wait upon God in constant, fervent, believing prayer. We must carry the names of the little flock upon our breast, like the high-priest, and wrestle for the unconverted. Luther spent his three best hours in prayer. John Welsh prayed seven or eight hours a day: he kept a plaid on his bed, that he might wrap himself in it when he rose during night. Sometimes his wife found him on the ground weeping. When she complained, he would say, 'O woman! I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them.'" '†

"But, besides this, we should stir up our communicants to fervent prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I think I have seen a more marked blessing upon my ministry since I invited my praying people to unite with me in spirit, though not in presence, in offering up intercessions and thanksgivings in behalf of our people and ourselves, every Saturday evening, between seven and eight. And sure I am, that a ministry of prayer will be a ministry of power. Then we may attempt great things *for* God, when we expect great things *from* God.

"One word more let me add, in conclusion. After we have done all this, and much more, we shall be unprofitable servants. Both our persons and our services must be sprinkled with better blood than that of Abel to be accepted of our Great God. To this fountain, opened 'for sin and uncleanness,' as to the brazen laver, let us daily repair. Thus shall

* "Preaching. A Sermon by Rev. J. C. Miller, price 2d. (Wertheim & Macintosh, and Hatchard and Son.)"

† "Memoir of M'Cheyne, page 366."

we be able to appeal to our people, and say, 'I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God,' (Acts xx. 26, 27);—we shall have the honour and privilege of winning souls to Christ; and after the few short years of our ministry are ended here below, it will be ours through grace to stand before the throne, saying, 'Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me,' (Isa. viii. 18); and to hear those welcome words addressed to each of us, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' (Matt. xxv. 21.)

"Give me a priest these graces shall possess:
Of an ambassador the first address—
A father's tenderness—a shepherd's care—
A leader's courage, which the cross can bear—
A ruler's awe—a watchman's wakeful eye—
A pilot's skill, the helm in storms to ply—
A fisher's patience—and a labourer's toil—
A guide's dexterity, to disembroil—
A prophet's inspiration from above—
A teacher's knowledge—and a Saviour's love!"

BISHOP KENN.

## CHAPTER IX.

**Employment of Lay Agents—Letters to District Visitors—Charities—Bible Society—Farmers' Meeting—Total Abstinence Society—Publicans' Association—Principles of Teetotalism—Sabbath Observance Clerical Society—Character of Nehemiah.**

We shall endeavour, in this Chapter, to give some account of the manner in which the fervent zeal which burned in the heart of the Minister was communicated to the congregation; or, in other words, how the Minister enlisted the services of others in every good work.

A large portion of Mr. Thornton's correspondence at Wendover is addressed to his valued lay helpers, and exhibits, in a very striking point of view, the importance and even necessity of such agency, in order to carry out the work of a parish.

In his fourth Address, he thus refers to them:—

"The District Visitors, Organist, Sunday School Teachers, Collectors, Members of the Working Society, and other friends, who have so kindly con-

tinued their *gratuitous* services to various charitable purposes, deserve the warm thanks of the whole parish. Under God, they have been privileged to benefit others, both at home and abroad, in various ways. Dear 'helpers in Christ Jesus,' be 'not weary in well-doing;' but 'be ye stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.'"

He also mentions them in his fifth Address.

"It is a great pleasure to me again to bear witness to the uniform courtesy and kindness which I have ever received at your hands, and to express my thankfulness for the active services of the Collectors, District Visitors, Members of the Working Society, Sunday School Teachers, and other lay helpers who are engaged with me in several of the plans mentioned on the fly leaf. More especially I thank all those who have so kindly presented to me so valuable a Testimonial* of your regard for your Minister as well as the ministry. Believe me, 'we seek not yours, but you;' at the same time, we accept this as a proof of God's grace in you." (2 Cor. xii. 14.)

The following letters are a specimen of the close

* See Letter 7, p. 173.

attention which he paid to his helpers, if any circumstance prevented personal communication.

### 1.—*To the District Visitors, when he was laid aside by Scarlet Fever.*

"Wendover, Feb. 5, 1844.

"To my beloved District Visitors and fellow-helpers in Christ Jesus; Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied unto you.

"I thank my God for the faith he hath given you, and for your labours of love among my dear people. I desire your prayers at this time in my behalf, and for my beloved parish. For *me*, that my present light affliction may turn to my salvation, through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. i. 17); that I may be contented to be *laid aside* as long as God sees fit; and that I may come forth, by-and-bye, purified and sanctified, a better man and a better minister; that tribulation may work in me patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. For my beloved *parish*, that my present trying separation from them, in presence, not in heart, and the interruption of some of the regular means of grace, may prove a *blessing* to the people; that they who have never

valued these means, nor profited by them, may be led to repentance by their loss, and that they who have highly prized the means, may be led more directly to the *Fountain* of all grace, which never never fails.

"And now, dear friends, farewell. Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice! I beseech you to visit the sick as often as you have opportunity, and read and pray with them, and relieve them liberally, and all that have need, while the present cold weather lasts. My dear partner joins me in wishing you all peace and health.

"From your affectionate minister,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

2.—*To a District Visitor, on the death of her sister. Written during his illness.*

"Vicarage, Monday Evening."

"You have been often in my thoughts since your late heavy loss; and I should have written sooner to express my best sympathies with you, had I felt more equal to the mental exertion.

"I do trust that it has pleased God to assuage the bitterness of your grief by the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and that the sweet thought of the bliss on which your dear sister has entered, and of her consequent gain, abundantly reconciles you to your

loss. Besides, think how much your Saviour is glorified in the death of his saints; for it is written, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his Saints.'

"I have read with real interest, and I trust profit, the three last Addresses in Hugh White's book, during this last week, so that I cannot forbear sending it for your perusal.

"I take this opportunity of thanking you and your sisters for the mark of attention in sending me a pair of gloves and hatband. It would have been a painful pleasure to have been allowed to commit her mortal remains to the earth, in the full hope of her joyful resurrection; but the Lord's will is infinitely wise and good. I have not before mentioned to any of your family my sorrow on Tuesday the 23rd, when I was on my way to your house, to see the blinds drawn down, telling me the sad and yet the joyful tale, that the spirit had taken its flight. I feel it no small cause for thankfulness, when one more soul is safely landed in heaven. I pray God abundantly to quicken us all.

"Believe me ever yours very sincerely,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

3.—*To a District Visitor who was very ill.*

"Wendover, Jan. 28.

"We have heard with deep concern of your seri-

ous and alarming illness, attended with so much suffering and weakness. I cannot refrain from expressing our sympathy with you at this trying time; and still more, my desire to stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance, that you may be mindful of Him who in all our afflictions is Himself afflicted. 'For we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' (Heb. iv. 15.) He is the Head, and all his people are his Body, his members, 'of his flesh and of his bones.' (Eph. v. 30.) A marvellous word! Can the flesh be torn, and the bones be broken, and the head not feel it?

"Though he be glorified above what we can conceive, he is a living, sensible, and compassionate Head; and as nearly and closely united to all his members now, as when they saw him with their eyes, and heard him with their ears. (1 John i. 1.)

"There is nothing ails a poor believer in Christ, there is no groan riseth from his distressed heart, but it is immediately felt at the tender heart of the Lord Jesus, at the Father's right hand. We should *groan and sing* with the same breath, if we believed this firmly. I send a card containing the Psalms arranged in order for daily reading. Mrs. Thornton and I unite at half past twelve daily. How sweet is

Psalm xlvi. for to-day! Luther's Psalm, praying the Lord to make your consolation abound with the sweet sense of his love.

"I remain, dear Miss H——, yours very sincerely in the Lord,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

### 4.—*To a District Visitor when he was absent from Wendover.*

"Gorleston, near Yarmouth, Aug. 15, 1844.

"Your very kind and most interesting letter reached me yesterday. The post arrives late, and leaves so soon, that I had not time to answer it. We have a very nice house on a cliff, facing a fine pier, which forms the entrance to Yarmouth harbour. This place is much quieter and pleasanter than Yarmouth, which is two miles off. There is a little white wooden house on the pier, in one corner of which a large Bible is *fixed* on a desk for the use of pilots and sailors. There is a nice spirit of enquiry and seriousness abroad. The church is well filled twice, and we muster about twenty-five at our evening prayers at eight o'clock, and on Thursday evening there are above 100 in church. The poor receive the Gospel gladly.

"Now to Wendover. I was much concerned to

hear poor T.'s state. I wrote to him on Tuesday. God grant him repentance unto life. His mother's prayers, I trust, are treasured up in heaven. I am sorry J. and E. F. were absent on Sunday. Still we must be 'stedfast, unmoveable,' &c. Your account of Mr. C. is very pleasing indeed. Most thankful I am for his help, and pray God to bless his labour. All things are in the Covenant, and shall work. God may graciously intend mercy to some soul there through his means, and to some here through my means. How important it is to work by faith, and not by sight. I do not undertake any weekly visiting, and feel much refreshed already, though my heart is often at dear Wendover. I trust the services will continue to be well attended. . . . . I rejoice to meet you all in Spirit on Saturday evening. Give my Christian regards to your brother.

"And believe me, dear Miss H——, your very faithful friend,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

5.—*To a District Visitor who was absent.*

"Your welcome letter made my heart rejoice, and caused many thanksgivings to God on your behalf. We have no greater joy than to see our children walk in truth. I feel much for you in your present position. It is very hard to confess Christ from day

to day, and more so when, by so doing, we seem to thwart the kind wishes of friends. Still we ought to obey God rather than man. I noticed last night the forwardness, and yet backwardness, of the young man (see Luke ix. 61, 62), 'Lord, I will follow thee, BUT'—that little word 'but' is so handy. I enclose the morning sermon, thinking you will like it. Please bring it back when you return. I shall finish the subject (D. V.) next time. I hope you will be able to read it. The Prayer Union meeting is postponed till the Confirmation evening, that we may assemble the young people.... Dr. R. advises me to get a change of air this summer, and we talk of B——. If we should come to B—, I should like the opportunity of preaching occasionally and visiting the poor, and of hearing the truth faithfully preached by another. For, as you say, 'It is not life without a preached Gospel.' Your class keeps up nicely: they shall learn the Psalms after the Confirmation is over. I hope it will be a great blessing. Pray write again, and be encouraged to be 'stedfast, unmoveable,' &c. 'My grace is sufficient for thee at all times!'

"Mrs. Thornton begs to be very kindly remembered to yourself and sister; and believe me, your very attached friend and minister,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

### 6.—*To a District Visitor who had been discouraged in her work.*

"I have felt very sorry that the people in your district should have shown so much ingratitude to you after your unwearied kindness to them; at the same time, we must not wonder at it, when we know and feel how full of ingratitude our hearts are towards our best Friend.

"I write this to encourage you not to be weary in well-doing, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not. (Gal. vi. 9.) We must not forget that Jesus our Saviour was exposed to the most cruel and unkind opposition, being called 'a devil,' &c. &c. I hope and trust, as I have said to you already, there is a little shaking among these dry bones. Satan may see this, and stir himself to call forth all the opposition of the natural heart to distress and hinder you in your work of faith, and to hinder, perhaps, some who seemed to be escaping from his grasp. God has greatly honoured you, in many instances, in your district; therefore you must thank God and take courage. If you have any foes (which God forbid) you have many friends there; and many, I trust, will be *your* joy and crown as well as mine.

"You have my prayers. Receive this from your very sincere and obliged minister,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

"July 24, 1844."

*7.—To a District Visitor, thanking her for a present of chairs for the Communion Table.*

"Vicarage, May 9, 1846.

"I had only time this afternoon to peep inside the wrapper. I have now uncovered the chairs, and placed them in the chancel. Pray accept my best thanks yourself, and present the same to those friends who have assisted you in procuring them. I accept them as a very grateful 'acknowledgment of their obligation and regard,' of which I am unworthy. I am very much pleased with your choice, and with the great taste which the chairs exhibit. They are neat and appropriate in every respect. They may remind us of Him who sits at the Father's side, having finished his work on earth. Our time of rest is to come. It has been my privilege, in my absence, to witness a most peaceful death-bed scene, which I shall speak more of to-morrow evening.

"Yours in the best bonds very faithfully and affectionately,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

Such intercourse as this kindled a spirit of love which was diffused through the congregation, and many were animated to voluntary exertion. It was from the communicants that the collectors for the charities were selected, and, as every society had its appointed time of monthly or quarterly-meeting, so the little bands of fellow-workers were brought together for prayer and information, and fresh vigour infused amongst them. And to this devotional spirit we must trace the steady growth of the different associations. Hence, as we have seen, that liberality arose which more than doubled the subscriptions to the various charitable objects in the parish during the first eight years of his ministry. In 1837 and 1838, the total amount collected for all the Societies was about £272; in 1846 and 1847 it was £573. Hence arose that readiness to aid in the circulation of the Scriptures, which led to an annual sale of nearly 200 Bibles and Testaments in the parish? In 1837 the return was, 55 Bibles and Testaments sold; in 1843, 240; in 1847, 189. In five years above 1000 Bibles and Testaments were sold in the parish. This was a work in which Mr. Thornton took especial delight. He never lost an opportunity of furthering the interests of the Bible Society and the circulation of the Scriptures. Upon one occasion he raised a subscription among his friends for the

purpose of employing a colporteur to go through the villages and towns of Buckinghamshire; and in the course of thirteen weeks his agent had disposed of 1733 Bibles and 1766 Testaments. Upon another occasion he was staying at an hotel at Hastings, and proposed to the landlord to make him a present of a copy of the Scriptures to place in every room in the hotel. The landlord not only accepted with much pleasure the offer, but mentioned the circumstance to other hotel keepers at Hastings, many of whom voluntarily adopted the plan of having a Bible in every apartment of their houses.

But it was not in order to secure ease to himself that Mr. Thornton sought the co-operation of others. His one object was to raise up a band of faithful witnesses to make a consistent stand against sin and immorality. With this view, he has been known to ask, when kneeling in prayer at his Bible-reading with the farmers, that these brethren might be known as Christ's people; that when at market or at home, in the field or at the fair, they might be *marked men*. And the impression remained, as some have since acknowledged, "that they were marked men."

This principle of combination developed in every thing. Reference has already been made to Mr. Thornton's deep conviction of the evils arising from the prevalence of intoxication, which induced

him to adopt the system of Total Abstinence. It was not a love of novelty, or a want of faith in the power of the Gospel to reform and change the drunkard's heart, which led to this; it was simply the love of souls, which made him use all means, if by any means he might save some. The high Christian standard, and the modesty with which he employed the instrumentality of the pledge, was manifest in all his public addresses upon the subject, and in his more private conversations, especially with those who differed with him as to the principle. Nor was he content with making his appeal, and presenting his pledge as the only safeguard to the poorer subjects of intemperance; but he carried his arguments to the citadels of the evil, and, with that simplicity and boldness which marked his whole life, he formed the publicans into an association for the purpose of checking in some measure the grosser and more flagrant effects of the vice. There were twenty-three public-houses and beer-shops at Wendover in 1845, or, in other words, a public house to every 87 people. The first step was the most difficult. Mr. Thornton called upon each public-house keeper, and invited him to join in a Society for the purpose of closing the public-houses during a part of the Sunday. Seventeen out of the twenty-three came into his terms, and the following extracts from the minute-

book of "The Wendover Publicans' Association," will be read with interest.

"At a Meeting of Publicans held at the Junction at Wendover, Dec. 31, 1845, at 11 A. M.: present Rev. S. T., Messrs. C. F., &c. &c.,—

"The Vicar stated the object of the Meeting, viz., 'To induce the Publicans to close their houses during the forenoon of the Lord's Day.' He read a letter from a legal adviser, of which the following is a copy, '*A Licensed Innkeeper may refuse to draw beer for a townsman at any time during Sunday,* but not for a traveller.' The Vicar also stated that several Publicans, then not present, promised to agree to the same as the rest. But it was thought better to gain the unanimous consent of all, if possible; and it was resolved to invite all the other Publicans to attend a Meeting on Monday, Jan. 5, 1846, at 11 A. M.

"At the adjourned Meeting, the following Resolutions were passed.

"1. That the Publicans do agree to close their houses, except to travellers, during the whole of Sunday morning till half-past 12 P. M., and during the Afternoon Service. This agreement to be valid for one month.

"2. That Messrs. Thornton and Rowton be requested to call on the other Publicans and request them to agree to the same.

"3. Mr. J. Franklin stated that he had for some years past closed his house the whole of Sunday, and therefore is not a party to this agreement.

"4. That this Meeting do adjourn till Tuesday, Feb. 3, at 6 P. M., when it is hoped that all the other Publicans will attend."

"*Mem.* Seventeen made this voluntary agreement for one month.

On Feb. 3, 1846, the Vicar provided tea for the company. On the next day the following Resolutions were unanimously agreed to.

"1. That we, the Publicans here present, do agree to close our houses for six months every Sunday morning till half-past 12 P. M., and during the hours of Divine Service in the afternoon, except to travellers.

"2. That whereas there is an objection to sign our names, we hereby pledge ourselves by word of mouth to keep this agreement.

"3. That the first resolution be considered as a preliminary step to the entire closing of our houses during the whole of Sunday, except to travellers, provided we can make such agreement at the end of six months, or at any future period.

"4. That we do also recommend that our houses be closed, except to travellers, also during the interval between Morning and Afternoon Service, pro-

vided the other Publicans will agree to adopt this plan.

"5. That this Meeting understands that the beer-houses are bound by law to be closed on Sundays till one o'clock.

"6. That this Meeting do hereby resolve to form an Association, to be called "The Publicans' Association for Wendover and the Vicinity," and that a Secretary be appointed at the First Meeting.

"7. That the Members of this Association do meet on the first Tuesday in every month, at 7 o'clock, at the Junction.

"8. That the Rev. Messrs. S. T. and R., and Messrs. F. and F., be requested to have an interview with the other Publicans in the parish, and, if possible, to gain their voluntary consent to the agreement in the first Resolution, and to the suggestions offered in the others." Here follow the names of *twelve public-house keepers, and six beer-shop keepers,* who agreed to the above.

The next Meeting was held on March 3, 1846.

"The Chairman offered up prayer to Almighty God.

"W. M. promised to close the whole day. Several interesting facts were mentioned, to show the good which had already resulted from the efforts made.

"1. Mr. F. stated that he had closed *till* 4 P.M. without loss.

"2. Messrs. H. and J. stated they had closed *the whole day*.

"3. Mr. F., of Lee Gate, had refused beer in the forenoon, and Mrs. F. shop things.

"4. A public-house and a beer-house in Ellesborough had closed the whole day in consequence of the paragraph in the newspaper, stating the example of the Wendover Publicans."

"On Tuesday, June 2, 1846, the Meeting was begun with prayer, after which Mr. Thornton stated that the proceedings of the Publicans at Wendover had been mentioned in the Report of the Parent Society in London.

"Those present seemed discouraged by the apathy of others; but Mr. Thornton reminded them that they had not pledged themselves to attend the monthly meetings.

At the Meeting on July 7, "All present concurred in expressing the beneficial results of the measures hitherto adopted. Mr. H. stated as his conviction, that there is less Sunday drinking. That some who used to frequent ale-houses in the morning, now clean themselves and attend a place of worship. Mr. F. stated that a customer of his had threatened to tempt him with money to sell beer, but he had never put that threat in execution."

At a Meeting held in August, two public-house keepers stated, that they had found peace of mind, and sustained no loss, and the public had not complained of inconvenience. It was also stated, that many customers had their beer on Saturday night.

In a work of so much acknowledged difficulty, it is not possible to judge of its efficiency by results; we are, however, warranted in saying, that the Total Abstinence Society at Wendover was not without its fruits, to which Mr. Thornton would sometimes refer with thankfulness to God. But, that no doubt may exist as to the view which Mr. T. took of the system of Teetotalism, we give from his own lips the reasons for his having adopted it himself and recommending it to others.

"1. It was in accordance with the broad rule of Scripture, 'Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' If abstinence will advance, or tend to advance the glory of God in the good of others, we must abstain.

"2. On the ground of expediency. Viewing drunkenness as a physical evil, it must have a physical remedy; just as we raise lunatic asylums to restrain lunatics.

"3. On the ground of example and expence. We cannot so well exhort drunkards to total abstinence, unless we abstain ourselves.

But this movement among the Publicans was only a continuation of the system which had been already extensively carried out. We have seen (p. 91), that Mr. Thornton had gone round the parish in person, and secured the co-operation of the different classes in checking, as far as they could, the profanation of the Lord's Day. Two Agreements had been drawn up and numerously signed, of which we give copies.

1.—*Agreement signed by twenty-six Occupiers of Land and Employers of the Poor, in the parish of Wendover.*

"We, the undersigned, being occupiers of land and employers of the poor in the parish of Wendover, Bucks, conscious of the great importance of keeping holy the Lord's Day, and deeply regretting the past profanation of it amongst us by buying and selling, desire to do what in us lies to assist our labourers to lay in their weekly stock of provisions before the commencement of the Sabbath; and with this view we do hereby engage, from this day forward, to pay their weekly wages to those employed by us, not later than 12 o'clock on Saturday morning."

2.—*Agreement signed by twenty-four Dealers and Shopkeepers.*

"We, the undersigned, being wholesale and retail dealers in various articles of food and clothing, and having shops within the parish of Wendover, Bucks, conscious of the great importance of keeping holy the Lord's day, and fully aware of our past neglect and guilt in this matter, do hereby engage from this day forward not to open our shops, or sell or manufacture any thing for sale, or suffer any of our goods going out for consumption to be paid for afterwards, except baking dinners and setting spunge, on any Lord's Day."

Nor were these efforts confined to his own parish. Notwithstanding his many domestic and parochial engagements, Mr. Thornton was rarely absent from the meetings of the branch Associations of the different religious Associations held for some miles round Wendover. If he could help in any way, by advocating the cause himself, or in bringing others who could, no journey was too long, and no weather too inclement; and while he would sometimes good-naturedly lament that others, who might render the most valuable assistance, were "sad stay-at-homes," he was never so happy as when he found other

speakers to whom he could defer on a public occasion. No member was more valued at the Clerical Society than Spencer Thornton—always punctual; always prepared. His addresses well considered; his prayers offered in childlike confidence; his spirit full of brotherly love; he was ever ready for a good work. Those who remember his note book, his bundle of tracts, his circulars and subscription lists, his notices of meetings and arrangements for deputations, will not regard the remark which was made of him as being extravagant: "While others were talking, Spencer Thornton was doing."

A brother clergyman has sent the following characteristic trait:—"After the funeral of a neighbouring clergyman, whom he much loved and esteemed, when the numerous clergy and others who were present were dispersing from about the grave, I missed Mr. Thornton. Walking round the church, on the side furthest from the grave and screened from view, before I could see him I heard his voice, endeavouring to improve the solemn event to the good of a poor woman. At the inn, going into the stable, where the horse was being harnessed, I again found him similarly engaged with the ostler. Thus was it always with him, 'instant in season and out of season.'"

It would be difficult to say how much arose from

his mere example, and how much from his persevering activity. Whether we point to the School and Services in the parish of Lee; or to the School-room erected at Scrubb Wood,* where a Weekly and Sunday lecture was established; or to the new church built at Aylesbury, in which he took a very active part; or to the good influence exerted in the social meetings of Clergy at his own home, we see the same earnest, consistent, and single-eyed plety. And in concluding this imperfect sketch of his ministry, we are reminded of the spirit of one who, in twelve years, accomplished a work which forms the subject of an entire book of inspired history. The leading feature of Nehemiah's character is given in his memorable reply to Sanballat, "*I am doing a great work.*" The desolation of Jerusalem, the judgment upon his nation, the sin which had brought it down upon them, caused him great heaviness and sorrow of heart; and zeal for the God of

* Upon the occasion of laying the first stone of this school, Mr. Thornton and his curate met the bricklayer and the poor people residing on the Common, at 7 o'clock A. M. Mr. Thornton, upon laying the stone, repeated Isaiah xxvi. 16, "Behold, I lay in Zion," &c., and commented upon it, saying, "that the hearts of many would be gladdened at a sight which told them that a house for God was being built in their very midst." He said he was glad to see so many Dissenters present. His remarks were very pointed and impressive, and there is reason to believe that they were blest to one person, who dates his first serious convictions to the address delivered that morning.

Israel led him to an entire devotion of himself to the work. Hence that spirit of prayer, of self-denial, of patient caution, of persevering activity, of communicative energy, of respect for the Sabbath and honour for the word of God, which rendered him so eminent a blessing to his countrymen. And the same grace which wrought mightily in Nehemiah, wrought also in the subject of this Memoir. A burning zeal for souls led captive by Satan and blinded by the god of this world, constrained him to surrender all for Christ. And if any circumstance from without renders one man more successful than another in the ministry, it is when he, like Nehemiah, is placed above all possible suspicion of being influenced by any other motive than the love of Christ. If the expences of the parish exceeded the salary of the Vicarage;* if the prayers with which every service of every day began and ended flowed from a heart which no one doubted was deeply conscious of human insufficiency; † if the lay helpers throughout the parochial machinery, each one in his place and station, felt that he who directed the work was a fellow-worker with them in it; ‡ if temptations were resisted openly, and the most insidious attacks of enemies thwarted with

* Neh. v. 14. † Neh. i. 4, &c. ii. 4. ix. 6, &c.
‡ Neh. iv. 13—23.

courage;* if Sabbath observance was consistently promoted, and social happiness encouraged;† if charity and liberality increased, and souls were comforted by the word of God‡—all must be ascribed to grace: that grace which teacheth us to respond to the warning of the Prophet:—

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me that I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." (Jer. ix. 23, 24.)

It was truly said, by one who mourned the sudden and early termination of his abundant labours:—"How easy to him, and how impressive to others, was the passage granted to our dear friend; he cared not for the things of the world in his life, and they were not allowed to be a care to him in his last hour: he desired to spend and be spent for God."

* Neh. iv. 9. vi. 8. 11. 14. † Neh. xiii. 15. v. 1—13.
‡ Neh. iii. 1—32. viii. 1—8.

## CHAPTER X.

**Domestic life—Memoranda in Scarlet Fever—Accident to his eldest boy—Birthday letter—Letter to his Father—To a near relative—To his Godson—Death of his youngest child—Letters to his children and his mother.**

HITHERTO the character of Mr. Thornton has been illustrated from the records of his parochial ministry. It only remains for us to give a few details of his domestic life.

Although his many engagements necessarily took him much from his family, his holy and affectionate method of guiding his household and children in the way of godliness was very striking. A portion of every day was devoted to the Scriptural instruction of the elder children; and in the family prayers various plans were devised for keeping alive the spirit of devotion. Sometimes the servants and children were catechized in the Sermon of the preceding Sunday. At others, each read a verse in turn, and suitable remarks were made; and no one could spend a day at the Vicarage without feeling

the peculiar atmosphere of holiness which prevailed.

Within a day or two of the birth of his fourth child, Mr. Thornton was taken ill with scarlet fever, which he had caught in his visits to the poor. This, at such a moment, was a severe trial, as it exposed his family to the risk of infection, and prevented him from holding any intercourse with them. Upon his recovery—which was hastened, under the blessing of God, by his temperate habits—he committed to writing the following memoranda of his thoughts during his illness.

"Hallelujah!—Wed., Jan. 24.—Kept my bed.—Mother came.

"Friday, 26th.—Savary pronounced it scarlet fever. First thought was, perhaps I shall die! *Afraid!* I felt not ready. Thought of Frederic.* Begged mother to join me in prayer. *I* prayed, 'Thy will be done.' The Lord brought my life and sins before me!

"Sunday, 28th, morning.—Alone. Communion Sunday. The Lord led me to search my heart and life. I am now thirty years old. I see my life is divisible into two equal parts. Fifteen years for the world, fifteen for the Lord. But one thought struck me. How much more for the world the first fifteen,

* See page 53.

severe and painful accident, by upsetting a jug of scalding milk over himself. In reference to this, Mr. Thornton wrote:—"There is much mercy mixed with this cup. All is in the covenant, and among the 'all things which work together for good.' We are in His hands. He is more than parents, nurses, or physicians. Pray do not be too anxious about us, but remember us at a Throne of grace.... We have all things and abound. We want only a sanctified will. God grant this trial may yield the intended good to us all."

Again, after some days, he wrote—"Through mercy, dear little Fred is improving; but the progress is very slow and very painful. But indeed he is in the Lord's hands, who healeth him, as in Ex. xv. 26. Our subject yesterday was, 'The Burning Bush, Ex. iii. 4,' which I shewed to represent, 1st, Christ's incarnation and suffering; 2ndly, The covenant of grace; 3rdly, God's covenant care over his Church. This last was most beautifully appropriate. 1 Pet. v. 10 is my prayer. What a thought! How it endears affliction to know that all these things are in the covenant."

To another relation he wrote:—"We have passed through anxious days and nights. We trust that

patience had her perfect work; and our gracious God taught us to say, 'Thy will be done,' before he removed the stroke. We know not now whether to praise most for the past, or to pray that we may be kept from forgetting this mercy, and may render unto the Lord according to the benefits done unto us." Again, on April 4:—"We have reason to speak of mercy and judgment. He might have been killed instantaneously, or blinded! We feel very thankful for all the sympathy of our dear friends, and, above all, for the sympathy of Jesus, and we desire all who have prayed not to fail to praise also."

After lengthened suffering, it pleased God to answer the parents' prayer in the recovery of the child. A few months before his death, Mr. Thornton placed his son in a school at Brighton. And when he was about to leave him he was speaking to him upon the great subject which was ever uppermost in his own heart—preparation for Heaven—and said: "If we love Jesus, we need not fear death more than we should going from one room to another, for we should be quite safe."

*The following Letter was written to one of his children on her Birthday.*

"July 17, 1849.

"2 Cor. v. 17.

"My dearest child,—Papa gives you this desk,

with an earnest prayer that God will give you *a new heart.*

"You have lived nine years; you may not live nine years more. It is time to seek the Lord. Where are the nine years? What have you learnt? What have you done? What have you not done? What do you mean to do? Think of these little questions, my dear child, and try to answer them to-day. Lift up your heart and say, 'O God, for Jesus Christ's sake, give me thy Holy Spirit. Make me a *new* heart, and a right spirit. Shed abroad thy love in my heart, that I may know thee, and love thee, and try to please thee.' It is time to love your Bible, and prayer. It is time to strive against sin. It is time to choose the better part; Luke x. 42.

"God bless you, my dearest child, is the prayer of your very affectionate

"PAPA."

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*After his Father had attended the funeral of a near relative, he wrote thus,—*

"March, 1846.

"MY DEAR FATHER,—We are very glad to hear a better account of my mother's cold. I hope by this time it is quite gone, and your house filled with the voice of joy and health. Thank you for so long

a detail in your letter, though I am always sorry to have any of my letters on the road on Sunday, as we should let our men-servants and inferiors rest as well as ourselves. I think the Sunday travelling of the mails by land is a great national sin; and whatever arguments might have been urged in old times, they lose their force since railroads accelerate them so much.

"Though we cannot turn the nation, we may do a little as individuals, and refuse to share the nation's guilt.

"I thought of you yesterday frequently. It was, no doubt, a melancholy day.

"How important is the one thing needful! How precious an interest by faith in that Almighty Saviour whose dying love we commemorated this week.

"Your very dutiful Son,

"SPENCER."

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*Upon the death of a relative.*

"Wendover, May 26, 1846.

"MY DEAREST FATHER,—What a succession of bereavements! I cannot but dwell with deep interest on the happiness of dear Aunt D——, and desire not to lose sight of the *principle* which made her victorious in death. It was most striking and interesting to see how she was led to renounce herself entirely, and to cast herself, as the chief of sin-

ners, on the free, unmerited mercy of God in Christ. When I repeated to her Rom viii. 32, she repeated the word 'freely,' and said, 'Yes, it must be *free*, to think of his saving such a rebel and wretch as I am!' To Uncle H— she said, 'Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?'

"I trust we may have the same hope of my other dear Aunt. God has dealt very gently with her in her long affliction, and, I trust, has been teaching her, and preparing her for her great change. Oh what a great change it is! A few years are granted to those that remain! I shall think of you, visiting that vault again! Who will be the next?

"Believe me ever, my dear Father, Your dutiful and affectionate Son,

"S. T."

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*After the death of a relative, he wrote to his Father—*

"Wendover, March 11, 1847.

"My Dear Father,—As W—— expressed a wish that I should attend the funeral, I propose (D. V.) to go, and think it likely I shall leave home to-morrow to pay a visit at the Hasells, and sleep there. I return W——'s letter with many thanks.

"I do sincerely trust that the solemn realities of

eternity may be brought powerfully before our minds at this time.

"How trifling every earthly thing seems in comparison of the immortal soul!

"'Prepare to meet thy God;' 'Ye must be born again;' 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;' these and such like texts seem powerfully uttered in all our ears. Oh may the Spirit of God make them to reach our hearts! We have much enjoyed the visit of our excellent Bishop. There were fifty-six confirmed. I trust God gave His Holy Spirit in answer to the prayers of His people. I am ever your dutiful and affectionate Son,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

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*To his Father, who was ill.*

"Wendover, Sept., 1849.

"..... You are continually in our thoughts. Our heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that your life may be spared to us for some years to come. But we do more earnestly still desire and pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will visit and teach you. How sweet is it to have the promise in John xvi. 8—15, 'Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more.' (Job. xxxiv. 31, 32.)

"I send you this morning's text, Ps. xxvii. 4. May it be our desire, and it shall surely be accomplished.

"Ever your dutiful and affectionate Son,

"SPENCER."

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*To a near relative, on his Birthday.*

"Wendover, Tring, Nov. 19, 1847.

"MY DEAR G——,—I cannot allow to-morrow's anniversary to pass in silence without a line. I write to offer you my warmest congratulations on the completion of another year, and to wish you many more to come. But there is one desire of my heart which I must add, that you may experience the power of the new birth in all its reality, as Nicodemus did. We live in days when this great change is explained away, as if it invariably and necessarily takes place in baptism; but surely St. John has given us a safe test whereby we may know if we have been born again. (1 John iii. 10.) The great change must appear in our tastes, affections, desires, aims, pursuits, and friendships.

"Believe me, dear G——, we do not cease to pray for you and dear A——. We are quite well, and unite in love to you both.—Yours very affectionately,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

### *To his Godson.*

"Wendover, Jan. 9, 1843.

"'I, thy servant, fear the Lord from my youth.' (1 Kings xviii. 12.)

"My very dear P.,—When you receive this you will be just six years old. I remember the day you were born as if it were only yesterday, and yet it is six years ago. How quick they are gone! How have you spent them? Though you are very young, you have done many sins. Naughty things by thought, word, and deed against your good God and Saviour, and against your kind Papa and Mamma, and brothers and sisters. What a bad thing sin is! But God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for little children; to wash them from their sins in his own blood, and clothe them in his righteousness, and make them new hearts by his Spirit dwelling in them. Be thankful to God, my dear boy, for giving you such parents as teach you to love, and read, and learn your Bible, and to pray to God. May the Holy Spirit teach you, my dear P., and make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. iii. 15.)

"I shall pray much for you to-morrow. I send you a little map of the world, and a little book to explain it. Ask Miss G. to help you. It will shew you how many poor people have no Bibles nor

teachers, but live without God, without Christ, without hope. Pity them. Pray for them. Be thankful for your Bible and good books, and learn your lessons well, that you may grow up to be a good and useful man.

"Receive this from your affectionate Godpapa,

"S. T."

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"Jan. 8, 1844 or 45.

"MY DEAR LITTLE P.,—I wish you many happy and holy returns of your birthday. You are now getting a great boy, and have learnt to know right from wrong. You know, too, that by nature you refuse the good and choose the evil; but I hope, my dear boy, God has given you a desire after that which is good. You know that Jesus says, 'Suffer little children to come unto me.' Never stay away from Jesus. When you are naughty go to Him. He will not refuse you, but love you, and wash you, and bless you. He will give you His Holy Spirit to make you holy. I will tell you a little story about a little girl. They called her Taunie. She was at church on Christmas-day, and only kept her bed one day, and died at night. I preached on Ps. xxxiv. 11. I said I thought she was gone to Heaven. Shall I tell you why I think so? Because she loved her Bible, and her Hymns, and her Saviour. By nature

she was passionate, but for the last few months she was very meek. Good bye, my dear P. May God bless you now and for ever. From your very affectionate "GODPAPA."

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"Wendover, Jan. 16, 1846.

"MY DEAR P.,—I did indeed forget your birthday, and am very sorry for it; so you must forgive me. Only think! nine years old! You are older than little Samuel when he said, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' I hope your heart has said so to God before this time, and like David, Ps. xxvii. 4, you can say, 'One thing I have desired.' When I was as young as you, I was very foolish and naughty. I knew my Bible and God's will, but I did not love Him. After this he made me feel myself a sinner, and made me flee to Jesus. I will tell you a pretty story. A little boy was once on the top of a roof where several men were at work. He was looking about him, and his foot slipped and he fell. In falling, he caught by a rope and hung between heaven and earth, where he could neither get up nor down. At this moment a kind man ran out of the house, and standing below with open arms, called out, 'Let go the rope and I will receive you. I *can* do it.' The boy stopped a moment, and then let go

his hold and dropped safely into the man's arms. Here you see what faith is. The little boy believed the man was able and willing to save him, and he trusted him. Jesus is like the kind man. He stands with open arms and calls you, dear P., to come to him, to trust in his love, and to obey his voice. He is able and willing to wash away all your sins, and to make your heart new. I will tell you my text for New Year's Day—will you learn it by heart—1 Chron. iv. 10. It is a nice prayer for every night and morning.

"Your very affectionate Godpapa,

"S. T."

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"Wendover, Jan. 10, 1848.

"I was preaching last Sunday on Rom. xii. 2. I said that *to prove the good will of God* is the highest end of man. Thus did Jesus prove the good will of God. See Psalm xl. 8; Luke ii. 49; John iv. 34; Matt. xxvi. 39. Try to follow his steps. And now, dear P., give yourself anew to God. Read Ps. xxv. and xxvii. when you have time.

"From your affectionate Godfather,

"S. T."

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Early in 1849, when Mr. Thornton was in London for the purpose of attending the Annual Meetings of

the Religious Societies, it pleased God to send a heavy affliction upon his family, by the removal of the youngest child, after a suffering illness from hooping-cough. It was the first bereavement in this happy domestic circle, and the harbinger of a far heavier shock which it was destined soon to sustain. The little infant was buried at Wendover in a brick grave, the construction of which her father had with much care and interest superintended, little foreseeing how very soon he would occupy the space beside his sleeping child. The grave, and little marble head-stone, with an inscription, had only been completed one fortnight before his own removal.*

The following day he wrote to his children at Wendover :—

"40, Portland Place, May 10, 1849.

"My Dearest Children,—I dare say you have been thinking a great deal about Baby, and praying to God to make her better. He has heard our prayer, and answered it in a different way. Last night, at 11 o'clock, her happy soul left its little suffering body, and fled to heaven.

"Our dearest baby is now with Jesus. She

* "In memory of Katherine, seventh child of Spencer Thornton, M. A., Vicar of this parish. She fell asleep in Jesus, May 9, 1849, aged fifteen months. Present with the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 8."

shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more. She shall feel no more pain. She will never cry again. She will never again need to be washed, or dressed, or rocked to sleep; for Jesus has done all things for her, and has taken her soul to himself.

"To-morrow Papa and Mamma will come home again, and bring little Katherine's cold body in her coffin; and in a few days we shall all follow her to the grave, where she will lie, till Jesus shall call her up on the morning of the resurrection.

"And now, my dear children, think of death. Love Jesus. Ask him to forgive you, and bless you; and when you have read this, kneel down together with E——, and say a little prayer.

"God bless you, my dear Julia, and Freddy, and Henry, and Claude, and George, and make you his dear children.

"From your affectionate

"PAPA."

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*To his Mother.*

"Wendover, Monday, May 14, 1849.

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,—I know you will be often thinking of us..... We were advised to close the coffin in town, and conveyed the little body by rail. .... It lies on two chairs in the drawing room.

The children seemed to realize their loss at first, but their hearts are very light.

"We have decided to bury her on Wednesday next, at 11 A. M., in a brick grave, at the south west corner of the churchyard, near my study window. We make the grave full size, to contain three or four. Who will be next? We have received many kind letters, full of sympathy, from various friends. I was enabled to preach yesterday, and lecture in the evening. The Lord's ways are full of love. I believe we have been kept from a rebellious thought. F—— and I, and four children, and nurse, will follow the baby."

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"Wendover, May 16.

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,—Ebenezer! Hitherto the Lord hath helped us! This has been a trying day. We followed our little babe to her last resting place, at 2 P. M., when it was fine. It was a blessed moment when Silver read those words *so feelingly* (as he read the whole Service), 'We brought nothing, &c.' It was a bitter moment when the time came to part and turn away from the little coffin!

"But oh! what grace that is that saves a sinful child, without any works of its own. If God had required to do the least good work, she could not

have done it. This thought is beautifully expressed in Mr. T.'s note, which I enclose with Lord W. R.'s.

"We have both been graciously supported. Prayer has been wonderfully answered for us. My dear flock are full of sympathy. Both notes and verbal messages prove it.

"I am going to the Lecture this evening. Subject, Heb. ii., preparatory to Ascension Day. To-morrow's text is Heb. xii. 23, last clause.

"We long to see a deep and lasting impression in the children. 2 Kings iv. 26. Psalm xxxix. 9.

## CHAPTER XI.

**Preparation for Eternity—Employment of time—Events of the last week—Death—Funeral at Wendover—Address of Clergy to his Widow.**

It has been questioned how far God is pleased to forewarn his people of the approach of death, either by some external indication of Providence, or by an inward and secret persuasion realized by the individual. Many remarkable instances are recorded of a sort of prescience, leading to conduct which indicated a clear anticipation of a speedy removal; but it was not the case with the subject of this memoir.

It was evident to the apprehension of those who knew him best, that whatever general views of the value of time, or the nearness of eternity, Mr. Thornton entertained, he had not realized the immediate termination of his work on earth. And if the evidences of a rapid ripening for the harvest may now be traced by those who review the last year or two of his life, they did not then discern the purpose which his rapid growth in grace foreboded. Un-

consciously to him, and unexpectedly to his friends, the Lord was preparing his servant for his eternal rest. And most instructive it is to trace the steps by which that preparation was made.

The commencement of the year 1848 was a period of great solemnity. The sixth and last biennial Address* was issued, containing three questions,— "*What is this that thou hast done? How can man be justified with God? How can a man be born when he is old?*" The tone of this appeal is peculiarly earnest. He seems to have written it as one who had not a moment to lose. Unlike the former Addresses, which contain references to parochial arrangements, and prospects of ministerial effort, it is confined entirely to spiritual and practical truth. There is deep emphasis in such sentences as these, "Time flies rapidly, and hastens you and me on towards eternity." And again, "Reader, there is but a step between me and death. Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." In his sermon preached after the Funeral of the Rev. R. Marks, of Missenden, he had said, "Yes, my dear Brethren, we watch for your souls. For nearly ten years I have been labouring among you; we may or may not continue together

* This was printed as a tract, under the title of "Three Important Questions;" published by Wertheim & Co.

seventeen years more, but we must at all events part one day, and we must meet again in the great day of account. We must give account how we have preached; and you, how you have heard." In his diary, from which extracts have been given, he adopts a new method of entering his dates, indicating a resolution to begin the year 1848 with increased earnestness to redeem the time. Thus, instead of inserting simply the day of the month, he notes in his diary the weeks, days, and hours, occupied in the parish. For example:—

"April 2—9. Second quarter. Fourteenth week in the year.

"Monday. District Visitors. Enquirers, Class, &c. Thirty-four hours.

On Sunday, May 21, *I was idle at Marden.* This is the second Sunday in 1848. (The first was February 13, when he had sprained his ancle.)

"July 9—15. Twenty-eighth week. Twenty-three hours.

"Forty-ninth week. Advent Sunday. Total, 27 hours.

"Monday. (Here a list of visits, &c., is given.) Five hours.

"Tuesday. (Here a list of visits, &c. is given.) Five hours.

"Wednesday. Schools, &c. Six hours.

"Thursday. Poor at pay table, burial, visits, &c. Four hours.

"Friday. Conversation with a poor woman under conviction of sin. She said, 'I feel as if I could not look back, it is so awful.' Lecture at York's Buildings. Four hours.

"Saturday. Funeral, &c. Three hours."*

* Thus in the forty-ninth week Mr. Thornton spent 27 hours amongst his Parishioners in visits to the sick, Lectures &c., or on an average, four hours and a half every day.

This numbering of his days continued to the end of 1849, when we find his mind drawn to the same subject; his Sermons on Dec. 30 were upon Heb. xiii. 8, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and 1 Pet. iii. 7, "The end of all things."

On Saturday, Jan. 5, 1850, the annual Sunday School Teachers tea-party was held at the Vicarage, when the Lessons for the ensuing year were fixed, in accordance with the form published by the Church of England Sunday School Institute; of which a copy was given and explained to each Teacher. On the same day, Mr. Thornton wrote the following letters to two of his communicants.

"Vicarage, Jan. 5, 1850.

"MY DEAR A—,—Ebenezer! hitherto the Lord hath helped you. How many pillars of mercy you have to set up by the way the Lord has led you, and especially in 1849. And how few pillars of mortality, see Gen. xxxv. 14—20. The mercy has gone before and prepared you for the trial; and as your day, so has your strength been.

"What a motive there is in His faithfulness to trust Him for the time to come. God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted.

"What sweet comfort is in those words, 'I have

prayed for thee.' When the enemy comes in like a flood, Jesus stands as a Prince before the throne.

"May you find our New Year's motto very sweet, Ps. xxxi. 15, 'My times are in thy hand,' in his appointment, direction, and control. Blessed are all they that trust in Him.

"With prayer for your growth in every grace, believe me ever yours in the Lord,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

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"MY DEAR M.,—I was sorry to pass through on Tuesday, without seeing you.

"Another year has passed; a Jubilee year, a yea of liberty, rest, and redemption; may it prove such to your soul. A blessed Jubilee draws near, when all Christ's people shall rest in His love, shall be set free from the bondage of corruption, and be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and shall receive their long lost inheritance in God, as their portion for ever.

"Lift up your heart, then, dear fellow-pilgrim, and look to the heavenly hill whence your glorified Saviour will soon return, with the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them to meet the

Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 'Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.'

"Good-bye, dear M——. God bless you, and supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

"Ever yours,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

On Sunday, Jan. 6—the first Sunday of the year—he preached upon the Jubilee, and the New Birth, with reference to the baptism of his infant daughter, which took place during the service. And upon Monday commenced his work, with, if possible, increased vigour. In the forenoon, the usual monthly meeting of the Dorcas Society was held at the Vicarage. About sixteen ladies attended; and, as if to warn them that it was the last exposition they would ever have from their beloved Minister, the passage which he selected was 1 Cor. vii. 29—31. He had received a note from one of the members, who was prevented from being present by an accident which had occurred the day before. "How different," said Mr. T., "would have been our feelings, if, instead of receiving a note from Mrs. —— to say that she had been mercifully spared, we had heard she had been suddenly called into the pre-

sence of her Saviour. Yet how blessed it is to know that if she had been called she would have been safe. How uncertain is life! Let this thought quicken us to live only to the glory of God this year; for *'the end of all things is at hand.'*"

At three o'clock the same day Mr. Thornton met the female candidates for confirmation; at 6 o'clock, his class of married men; and at 8 o'clock, the class of young men who were candidates for Confirmation.

On Tuesday, Jan. 8, he wrote to the Association Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, offering to provide, in conjunction with some clerical friends in the neighbourhood, "for all sermons and meetings within a radius of six miles round Wendover;" he gave the names of eleven places, adding, "and any new ones into which I or my friends can gain an entry." The answer to this letter arrived when work was changed for rest.

On that afternoon he left the Vicarage for London to attend the Annual Clerical Meeting at the Rev. D. Wilson's; but on his way through Wendover he spent some time with a party of aged and infirm persons, to whom he was in the habit of reading and expounding the Scriptures, &c.; and, after this, he lingered to the last moment in the pursuit of his loved employment, paying several visits to the sick. He then proceeded by the train to London. A friend

who accompanied him observed him in the railway carriage reading aloud a paragraph from the *Record* Newspaper, directing the attention of his fellow-travellers to the great distinctive points of Protestantism and Popery, throwing in occasionally such remarks as might be profitable. Upon their arrival at Euston Square, they walked from the Station, Mr. Thornton carrying his carpet-bag in his hand. Two ragged boys ran after him, and begged to be allowed to carry it. Mr. Thornton yielded, after some time, to the importunity of one of them; and, having adjusted the burthen upon the boy's shoulder, he began to question him as to his mode of life. The poor little outcast answered, that he had no parents and no home. The conversation proved that he was as ignorant as he was destitute. *He had never heard any thing of Jesus Christ.* "Poor boy, poor boy!" said Mr. Thornton, half to himself, and half to his companion, in a tone of true commiseration, "*Yet he has got a soul—the poor thing has a soul. There is a ragged school in the New Road.*" The poor boy had never heard of a ragged school. But Mr. Thornton made enquiries, and having found out its locality, obtained a promise from the boy (who seemed pleased with the new scheme of his unknown friend) that he would regularly attend it.

On Wednesday morning Mr. Thornton attende

the Meeting at Islington, and was observed by many to be in a peculiarly happy and spiritual frame of mind. Having greatly enjoyed this season of brotherly communion, he left, saying, "What a delightful Meeting we have had!" How little could he anticipate where their next meeting would be!

He spent Thursday and Friday at Marden Hill, with his beloved parents, cheering and comforting them, and uniting his praises with theirs in the restored health which had been given to them both after a very serious attack of illness. But Wendover was in his mind, and on the 10th he wrote the following letter to an aged parishioner who had just lost his brother.

"Marden Hill, Hertford, Jan. 10, 1850.

"My Dear Sir,—I have felt much for you in your late affliction, and should have called on you on Tuesday if I had not thought that you would prefer quiet.

"I think you will have received, ere this, a little book which I told my servant to take to your house. I trust you will find the perusal of 'The Friendly Visit to the House of Mourning,' a great comfort to you.

"The scene through which you are now passing is a solemn one, especially at the opening of the fiftieth year. *How hard it is to realise our own death, and its all-important consequences!*

"One thing is needful, namely, an interest in

the blood, and righteousness, and finished obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. Weak faith, if it lean on Christ the Rock, is far better than strong faith and confidence, which leans only on self and our own good works, which are, after all, a foundation of *sand*. May God the Holy Ghost lead you and me, dear Sir, to a deeper knowledge of ourselves and our Saviour, and may he reveal unto us what we know not. Job xxxiv. 32, '*That which I see not, teach thou me,*' is a good daily prayer. I hope to call in a few days, and remain, my dear Sir, Yours faithfully,

"S. THORNTON."

On Friday he paid his last visit to his beloved relatives at Woodhall Park, where his conversation was chiefly directed to the wants of his poor parishioners. His expositions at family prayers on Friday were from John xvi. 7, and Titus iii. 4—6.

On Saturday morning, Jan. 12, he partook of an early breakfast, and started by the train from Hertford, to return to Wendover for his Sunday duties. He was accompanied from Ware by his uncle, Mr. Abel Smith, and seemed to be in perfect health and spirits. The day was intensely cold, and upon their arrival at the Terminus he proceeded on foot to his destination, saying that he preferred the exercise to taking a conveyance. He had reached North Street, Finsbury, when he was observed, by a person who

was cleaning the window of her house, to stagger and fall upon the pavement. She immediately went into the street, and, with the assistance of two men who were in a carpenter's yard close by, conveyed him into her house. He drew one breath, and life was extinct. The spirit was with Jesus. His name was discovered upon examining a card-case in his pocket, and his probable destination from the direction of a parcel which he carried in his hand. A policeman was instantly despatched to the house of G. Du Pré, Esq., 40 Portland Place. Mr. Du Pré and his family were in the country, but expected in London that afternoon; but the coachman at once recognized the description given by the policeman, and upon returning with him to North Street, identified his master's son-in-law. Expresses were sent off to announce the solemn event; but as the following day was Sunday, the Inquest could not be held until Monday, when a verdict of "Died by the Visitation of God" was immediately returned.

The funeral took place on Saturday, the 19th of January, at Wendover; and a scene presented itself such as probably had never been witnessed before in that place. It was a cold, cheerless day; the shops and windows were closed; the inhabitants were in mourning; and scarcely one of them who was not in tears. And if there was any other expression of feeling besides that of real sorrow, it was the lurk-

ing difficulty of realizing the event. For when the hearse reached the town, bringing with it the mortal remains of him who was to many dear to them as their own souls, not a few anxious enquiring eyes were fixed upon it, as if betraying the same feeling with the disciples in John xi. 13, "Howbeit Jesus spake of his death, but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep." But when, after some delay, the sad procession of clergy and relatives was formed, and the coffin was placed in the full view of the crowded congregation, the burst of grief mingling with the deep tones of the organ, told plainly how they loved him. Many looked upon him as their father; many as their best earthly friend; and all as a pastor such as it would be difficult to replace. It would be unjust not to record some of the expressions of affection* which were ut-

* In a few words of affectionate condolence to the School-children, printed and circulated amongst them by Rev. Thomas Hill, B.D., Archdeacon of Derby, and Hereditary Trustee of Hill's Charity in Wendover, the following sentence occurs, p. 18:—

"I will tell you a plain fact. In those occasional visits, which the duties of my office required me to pay to Wendover, I had the privilege of being received under the hospitable roof of your departed Pastor. On those occasions I saw something of him in his personal, domestic, and ministerial character. I found him as far above me in every spiritual attainment, as he was below me in age: and I left him, abashed, humbled, self-condemned, I hope I may add, improved, by such an evidence of the power of divine grace. I felt each of these visits, short as they were, to be a talent, for the use of which I was deeply responsible to God.

tered that day. But where every heart was full, it is not easy to recall them. One very elderly grey-haired man was heard to say, "Ah! he was a young man, but he was my father: and as for my children, he was more than a father to them." Another, weeping, said, "He was a friend to us all; a friend to soul and body too." Such was Spencer Thornton!

The parishioners put on mourning universally; and on the 20th and 27th of January, sermons were preached at Wendover by Rev. W. Du Pré, upon Gen. v. 24; by Rev. A. Isham, on Heb. xiii. 7; by Rev. W. Fremantle, on Luke xxiii. 43; and by Rev. F. Silver, on Phil. i. 21.*

It was generally understood that the family of Mr. Thornton had expressed a wish that the funeral should be conducted in as private a manner as possible; in consequence of which comparatively but few of the clergy were present upon the occasion. At the conclusion of the service, the following Memorial was drawn up, and, after a few days, presented by the Rural Dean, Rev. A. Isham, to Mrs. Thornton.

"We, the undersigned, members of the Central Bucks Clerical Society, and Clergy resident in the neighbourhood of Wendover, having been prevented, by the private nature of the arrangements for the Funeral, from taking a public part in paying a tribute of respect to our beloved and valued Brother in Christ, venture to intrude ourselves thus early upon you to express our feelings upon the loss which we have sustained in his sudden removal under the sovereign hand of our

* These sermons were printed, and published by Marshall, Aylesbury; and Nisbet and Co., London.

Almighty Father, and to convey our Christian sympathy to you, in the desolation thus created in his family and parish. We pray that you may be upheld by the everlasting arms, and abundantly comforted by the assurance that he has been taken in the fulness of his ministry to his everlasting reward.

"Wendover, January 19th, 1850.

"Signed,

"Wriothesley Russell.
Arthur Isham.
W. R. Fremantle.
Algernon Coote.
W. Ramsden Smith.
A. Frederick Ailward.
E. Arnold.
W. Pennefather.
Frederick Silver.
G. T. Spring.
W. W. Walton.
George Hill.
H. Meeres.
E. L. Smith.
John Samuel Baron.
Thomas Martyn.
I. J. Irwin.
E. Bayley.
G. V. Reed.
J. G. Joyce.
Bryant Burgess.
John Weighell.
Edward Owen, jun.
G. J. Collinson.
W. W. M'Creight.
Daniel Watkins.
George Cole.
Isaac King.
Wm. Burch Gale.
John Howe Snell.
J. B. Reade.
William Stephen Thomson.
J. B. Marsden.
William Barrett.
George Holloway.
Charles Blackman.
Samuel King.
William J. Burgess.
R. Norreys Russell.
Thomas Horn.
Charles Lloyd.
John R. Pigott.
John Harrison.
Edward Elton.
J. R. Hughes.
J. B. Turner.
W. Hastings Kelke."

The Rev. A. Isham referred to this in his Sermon after the funeral. He said, pp. 13, 14: "Wendover has experienced an affliction which the Bishop and nearly forty of the neighbouring clergy would have acknowledged by their attendance yesterday, had they not scrupled to intrude themselves upon the privacy of those who are most deeply affected."

The parishioners of Wendover testified their value for their minister, and their sense of the sudden and severe loss they had sustained, by mourning as they would have mourned for a brother; and a very liberal subscription was raised for the purpose of erecting a tablet to his memory in the church. A neat marble monument is now placed over the Vicarage pew in the Church with this inscription:—

"To the Memory of
the Reverend
SPENCER THORNTON, M.A.,
Vicar of this Parish,
who was suddenly called away
from his work on earth,
to his mansion in heaven,
on the 12th day of January, 1850,
at the age of 36.

'He needs no praise of man,
For his record is on high.'

This Tablet is erected by his mourning
Parishioners, in grateful remembrance
of his untiring devotion, both of mind
and body, to their spiritual and temporal
welfare, during the twelve years he was
permitted to be their Pastor.

"'They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.' (Daniel xii. 3.)

"'And I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.' (Rev. xiv. 13.)"

We may linger a few moments at the tomb of our

departed brother, and imagine the train of thought which occupied his mind as he left this lower world to enter Paradise. The notes and preparation for his Sermons for the following Sunday were found in his writing-case. The text which he had selected for the Morning Service was Rom. vii. 19, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." This was the subject of his thoughts:—The spiritual conflict; the experience of the new birth; the struggle between flesh and spirit. And who is there of the children of grace that is really acquainted with the work of regeneration but will know what searchings of heart, what exercise of conscience, what prayerful self-examination, the preparation of such a sermon must have cost him! And in the midst of the most abasing view of self-emptiness, and insufficiency, and utter vileness, the burdened flesh was laid to sleep, and the willing spirit returned to God who gave it. While, perhaps, he was musing over the experience of the Apostle, and repeating the words "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" —the summons came, and the next thought was praise, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Together with the notes of his sermon were two tracts, which had been evidently selected as suggesting thoughts which he intended to bring before the congregation. The title of one was, "Forgiven

or Unforgiven;" of the other, "How shall I spend next Sunday?" How deeply instructive and solemnizing is this simple fact! What questions for a death-bed! Forgiven through the merit of Christ —and whether in the body or out of the body, next Sunday will be a Sabbath! Unforgiven—and next Sunday will be as last Sunday, a broken rest; "for there is no peace to the wicked, saith my God."

But who can tell the calm of that first Sunday which our beloved brother spent with Jesus? Pondering upon the deceitfulness of sin, the infirmity of his heart, the many errors and shortcomings of the daily conflict. Wrestling with God for himself, his family, and congregation; walking hastily through the crowded streets of the Metropolis, his eyes and ears filled with the evidences of man's care and anxious labour, scarcely an object but told of sin and suffering: all this fired his soul with zeal for his Master and compassion for sinners: his armour was bright, and his sword was in his hand, and he was redeeming time that he might again engage in the fight, when the command went forth: and angels, quick as lightning, obeyed it. And while a crowd of strangers gather round the motionless corpse, amazed and awed by this sudden stroke of Providence—fear and curiosity and enquiry upon every countenance—and multitudes are passing and

repassing within a few yards, and some of those who loved him best on earth, too, are entirely ignorant of the event, myriads in Paradise are praising Him who is their praise, and not one spirit of the spirits of the just made perfect—not one of all the glorious company of the Apostles—not one of all the goodly fellowship of the Prophets—not one of all the noble army of martyrs—not one of all the host of angels who excel in strength—but rejoices with joy unspeakable in the knowledge that another jewel is added to the Redeemer's crown—another soul is safe!

To those who remain, "it was the darkening of a sun which shone brightly at noon-day."

And we cannot better speak of the deep ways of the Almighty than in the words of one who wrote:

"It is a mysterious appointment!.... It was so happy a domestic circle, and God was so glorified in it, and man so blest by it. And it is gone! What can we say? Really nothing, but that God has done it—and God is love. He whose hands were pierced, He has Himself with those pierced hands laid upon us this burden. Long ago, He in love infinite *so* ordered it..... He brightened those past years that it might end thus, and in *this;* and He is Love, and Power, and Wisdom infinite. It could not have been ordered otherwise without crossing some pur-

pose of love and faithfulness! .... For our dear brother, indeed, it is all manifestly blessed. He has been taken full-handed, doing his Lord's work, and blessed be that servant!"

At the south-west angle of Wendover churchyard, opposite to the study window of the Vicarage, is a vault surrounded by a low iron railing. Upon the largest of two head-stones is the following inscription:

In memory of
SPENCER THORNTON, M.A.,
Twelve years Vicar of this Parish.
Chosen in the Lord,
Accepted in the Beloved.
By faith he walked with God,
Looking for the glorious appearing of our
Saviour Jesus Christ.
He was suddenly called to enter into his rest,
January 12, 1850,
Aged thirty-six.

"'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' (1 Cor. ii. 2.)

"'Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' (1 Cor. xv. 57)."

## CHAPTER XII.

Sermon on Jubilee—First Sermon at Hertford Assizes—Second Sermon at Hertford Assizes—Letters to Parishioners—Letters to Rev. R. R., on death of his Father—To a young friend at Oxford—To a young Clergyman—Remarks on reading the Bible—Letters to his Mother—To a young person entering the University—Letters from one who had been converted by his ministry—From a young Minister after Mr. Thornton's death.

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### *Notes of Sermon preached on the first Sunday,* 1850.

"Lev. xxv. 11, 'A Jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you.'

"Both this year and day are remarkable. The year the 50th, the day Epiphany. The one a Jewish, the other a Christian ordinance: yet both set forth Christ.

"The Jubilee blessings are ours by the Epiphany.

"I. The Gospel Jubilee.

"II. How this year may be unto you a jubilee.

"I. *The Gospel Jubilee.* 'It is the Jubilee.' (Explain the ordinance. See verse 10.)

'The Jubilee year applied to *Persons* and *Property*.

"(1.) *A year of liberty,* verse 10, 39—55. Hence jubilee, יוֹבֵל to bring back.

"*Every slave was freed,* Deut. xv. 12. Every captive. Such is the Gospel jubilee! It finds man a slave and captive, Gal. iv. 3: 'We were in bondage.' In bondage to the law, to sin, to self, to Satan.

"It proclaims liberty, Isa. lxi. 1. Hear the Lord's first sermon, Luke iv. 18. It is the Jubilee, Zech. ix. 12.

"Is it impossible? Isaiah xlix. 24, 25; Luke xi. It is *liberty from the law,* Romans vi. 14; Gal. iii. 13. *Liberty from conscience.* It is satisfied. *Liberty from sin,* Rom. vi. 22. Christ not only gives liberty in the Gospel jubilee; but further, he fills both hands, as Deut. xv. 13, 14; Luke xv. Blessed liberty, Rom. viii. 21. Stand fast in it, Gal. v. i.

"(2.) *The Jubilee affects property, also a year of redemption,* verse 10, 13, 23—38. (Explain the case.) There is only one exception, v. 32. The reason is found in verse 23. "The land is mine." At the Jubilee it returns without money. Such is the Gospel Jubilee.

"Adam sold his inheritance. How should he redeem it back? Not he or any of his line. Moses tried, as it is written in the law, 'Do this and live.' Man must wait 1500 years more till Jesus Christ comes and brings in the Jubilee, Gal. iv. He pays

dearly for his inheritance, but here is an inheritance free for you. 'Ye have sold yourselves for nought,' &c. This redemption is *blessed redemption! Glorious* redemption, Eph. i. 7. *Plenteous redemption,* Ps. cxxx. 7.

"II. How this may be a jubilee *to you.* Why not?

"(1.) *Begin the Jubilee now.* What is this morning? 'It is the jubilee.' The trumpet blows (it proclaims liberty and redemption.) It is the trumpet of atonement that ushers in the Gospel trumpet. (1000 *sermons.*) Does it give an uncertain sound? 1 Cor. xiv. 8. *Liberty* through the blood. *Redemption* through the blood. Will you refuse it, and choose slavery? What would you think of the Jews if, when the jubilee came, they had not been anxious to recover their property? This was not the case. See the anxiety of Zelophehad's daughters, who were commended by the Lord, Numbers xxxvi. See the conduct of Naboth, 1 Kings xxi. 3, 'The Lord forbid it me,' &c.

"Tell the jubilee to others, James v. 19, 20. May none of us have the doom of Zedekiah, Jer. xxxiv. 17.

"(2.) *Look forward to the next Jubilee.* How anxiously would some poor undone Jew, who had sold himself in his poverty, look forward to the year

of jubilee. Even so let us look forward to the great jubilee of Christ's coming. If grace is such, what will be glory? If Christ's first coming was so blessed, what, what will be his second?

"What a jubilee to the *Jews*, Isaiah xxvii. 12, 13; lxiii. 4. He will raise the *dead* saints, 1 Cor. xv. 51. He will change the *living* saints, 1 Thes. iv. 16, 17. To both dead and living saints, what a jubilee will this be!

"Among the Jews, of course, property grew less valuable to a purchaser as the jubilee drew near. The buyer knew that it could only be his for a little while. He would not, therefore, take interest in it as a possession. So now let it be with us as we feel the great jubilee drawing near; as 1 Cor. vii. 29. 'Set your affection,' &c., Col. iii. 2."

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*First Sermon preached before the Judges at Hertford Assizes, Feb.* 27, 1849.

"'Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.'—1 Sam. ii. 30 (latter part).

"What a solemn majesty there is in God's truth. It is like its author, eternal and unchangeable! Such is the twofold principle here announced. Although 3000 years have passed away since it was

first revealed to Eli, yet it has been from the beginning one of God's laws, and will be to the end; it applies to all ages, ranks, and climes, but chiefly to men and nations which have 'the light of the Bible.'

"In setting forth this solemn text, we shall for various reasons confine ourselves to the plain written word of God, from which there can be no appeal, while we endeavour,—

"First, to trace this principle in God's *past* dealings with men; and secondly, to lead your minds forward to the *future*.

"First. *Let us trace this principle in God's past dealings with men.* 'Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.'

"Here let me notice, at the very opening of the subject, the solemn fact, that in one or other of these two classes, each one of us is included. It must be so, for this obvious reason, that with God there is no *neutrality*. Every man is one thing or another. 'He that is not with me is against me.' A lover of God, or a lover of pleasure; a man of God, or a man of the world; an honourer of God, or a despiser; an heir of heaven, or of hell. And it is a more solemn fact that despisers are the larger class. Indeed all are so by nature, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, while grace alone

makes any to differ. It is true there is innate in all mankind, a superstitious reverence of a God, which begets *slavish* dread, arising from conscious guilt; for 'man hates whom he has hurt;' but the honour due to God is a *filial* feeling, and springs from a believing view of Him who has revealed himself in Christ Jesus, as a just God and a Saviour. It is marked by a fear of *sinning* more than of *suffering*, as when Joseph refused, saying, 'How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' and not as Jacob, when he hesitated, saying, 'My Father peradventure will feel me, and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.' The exact condition of man since the Fall, is thus described in the word of God, 'All have sinned,' &c.

"It is not that all are destitute of benevolence, or justice, or truth, for this were experimentally untrue; but it is that all by nature are destitute of *piety*. It is not that the morality between *man and man* is extinct, but it is that the morality which connects *earth with heaven* has been broken asunder, and the world is now disjoined from that God with whom it stood, at one time, in high and heavenly relationship. One might imagine the gravitation of our planet to the sun to be suspended, and that it wandered on a strange excursion over the fields of immensity, yet it still may bear along with it the laws and processes

which now exist within the limits of the lower world. It might retain, even in the darkness of its wayward course, its chemistry and its magnetism, the adhesion of its parts, and the attraction which binds the sea and atmosphere, and all that is around it, to its own surface. And so, in the moral economy, there may be the disruption of our species from their God; the great family of mankind may have wandered from Him who is their head. There may be the reciprocal exercise, even throughout this alienated planet of ours, of good affections and tender sympathies, and many amiable and neighbourlike regards; and yet it may remain a truth, not merely announced by Scripture, but confirmed by experience, that nature hath renounced her wonted alliance with the Divinity, that the world hath departed from its God! That indeed is a woful delusion, by which the natural virtues of the human character are pleaded in *mitigation* of its ungodliness; when beheld in their true light, they enhance and aggravate the guilt. For who is it that attuned the heart to those manifold sympathies by which it is actuated? It were more excusable for a man to possess none of the finer feelings of humanity, and even to be brutish in his sensibilities, than to be capable of loving any one and every one but Him who is worthy of all love, because God is love. 'But in this was manifested

the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' (1 John iv. 9, 10.) What rich grace is here! Where was any thing ever like it! 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth.' God, the God against whom we have sinned, has found a ransom for us, a bondsman, a substitute. Our debt was exacted of him, and he was made answerable. Our guilt was counted his, that his obedience might be counted ours. He died for our sins, 'and rose again for our justification.' (Rom. iv. 25.)

"Oh, unutterable exchange.

"The sinless one is condemned—the guilty goes free.

"The blessed bears the curse—the cursed bears the blessing.

"The life dies—the dead lives.

"The glory is covered with shame, and the shame is covered with glory.

"The Holy Spirit reveals this way of salvation to the soul; strips the man of his own righteousness; clothes him with the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to him; gives faith to apprehend the

Saviour; fills the heart with joy and peace in believing, and renews it daily after the image of Christ Jesus. (Col. iii. 10.)

"Thus the sinner obtains mercy, not *at the expense* of God's justice, but *in the way* of justice. Grace reigns through righteousness, Rom. viii. 21. Man receives not a message of *impunity*; for this would be contrary to all the declarations of God, and to the strict character of God as a Judge; but a message of *forgiveness*. Thus man is saved through the atonement, which is in Christ Jesus. Devils are confounded and God is glorified.

"Be assured, then, beloved brethren, that *he* honours God most who receives this salvation most simply, and in the spirit of a little child comes to God *through Jesus Christ*, while he who neglects it through pride or unbelief, despises the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering, and is more inexcusable than he who despised Moses' law, and died without mercy under two or three witnesses; for of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace; for we know Him that hath said,

'Vengeance belongeth unto me,' Heb. x. 28; and 'Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.'

"It will clear up the matter if we illustrate the operation of this twofold principle in the history of *individuals* and *nations*. Time would fail me to tell of Abel and Enoch, of Abraham and Joseph, among the patriarchs; of Moses and Elijah, of Isaiah and Daniel, among the prophets; of David and Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah, among the kings; of a Peter, and a John, and a Paul, among the apostles; of the poor widow, who cast two mites into the treasury; and of Mary, who anointed the feet of Jesus with precious ointment, and wiped them with her hair (whom God has honoured by causing this to be told for a memorial of her to all generations); these, and a long train of others, prove that them that honour God He doth honour; while on the other hand, the histories of Pharaoh, Hophni and Phineas, the disobedient prophet; Jeroboam the son of Nebat; of Ahab and Jezebel; of Nebuchadnezzar, that despiser of God, who was driven from men and did eat grass as oxen for seven years, from the very hour that he spake, and said, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of *my* power, and for the honour of my

majesty,' Dan. iv. 30, prove that they who despise God are lightly esteemed. Nor can we forget the punishment of king Belshazzar, who humbled not his heart, but lifted up himself against the Lord of Heaven; and was he not *lightly esteemed* when his profane mirth was suddenly interrupted by a terrible handwriting upon the wall, 'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin!' *Mene*—God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. *Tekel*—Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting. *Peres*—Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. And in that night was Belshazzar slain; for 'them that honour God he will honour, and they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.'

"Nor is it not only in the history of *individuals*, but also of *nations*, that we see the text fulfilled. And why should it not be so? For what are nations but large societies made up of individuals? To deny God's right or power to rule over *nations*, is to deny him his own titles as King of nations, and King of kings, and Lord of lords. We must go down with Jeremiah to the potter's house, to learn God's sovereignty over nations. 'There the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Oh house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my

hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it. If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it: if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.' (Jer. xviii. 5—10.) The Jewish people afford an instance of God's dealings with nations in general. While their kings and people honoured his laws, his sacrifices, his Sabbaths, and his prophets, then it was well with them; but when 'they mocked his messengers, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, then the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy;' and when at a later period their children filled up the measure of their fathers' sins—crucified the Lord of Glory, and refused his grace which was preached to them even after they had done this—then again the King was wroth, and sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city;' and as many as escaped that vengeance have become 'an astonishment, a proverb, and a bye-

word among all nations' to this day. Is not this a solemn warning to men of *every* nation, that 'them that honour God he will honour, and they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed?'

"And now, having traced the principle of the text in God's *past* dealings with men, it becomes us, 2ndly, *to lead your minds forward to the future* day of account.

"Nations will then have passed away, while the Judge will deal with men as *individuals*, when every one of us shall give an account of himself to God. *Then* will the text receive its clearest fulfilment, *'Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.'*

"Is there a doubt of this on the mind of any one who hears me? Is there one who tries to persuade himself 'that a man may live as he likes; that God will *not* bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil; that it matters not who honours God or who despises him; who receives Christ or who rejects him; that God is too merciful to pass sentence of everlasting punishment on any of his creatures?' I would entreat such an one to stop and think—What mean the proceedings of this day already begun? The opening of the commissions; the summoning of juries and witnesses; the administration of the solemn oath; the

pleadings of counsel; the charge laid against the criminal; the summing-up of the evidence; the breathless anxiety of the Court while the verdict is pending, Guilty or Not guilty; the passing sentence of condemnation, or the acquittal of the prisoner. What means all this, I ask? It proves that laws may not be violated with impunity—that the day of reckoning comes. But is it only an adjustment of rights between man and man, or is it not also a representation, though feeble it must be confessed, of a far higher tribunal?

"It must be clear to every one that there are a thousand crimes committed amongst men which are never brought to justice. All human systems are imperfect. The most active police, the most vigilant superintendence, the most intelligent magistracy, the most acute counsel, the most patient judge, fails in detecting *every* offender, and maintaining the full majesty of the law in every case. Besides, there are ten thousand *sins* against the *laws of God*, of which man can be no judge, and of which an earthly Court can take *no* cognizance. How can man punish secret things, such as pride and covetousness, stifling the conscience, neglect of prayer, forgetfulness of God and unbelief of Christ, and grieving the Holy Spirit? If one man sin against another, the judge

shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?' (1 Sam. ii. 25.)

"And are there no mysteries in *providence* which will never be explained till the great day? Do you not see 'the prosperity of the wicked, for there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm, they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world: they increase in riches.' (Ps. lxxiii. 4, 5, 12.) Do you not see the afflictions of true believers? We shall be tempted to say, with the Jews of old, 'the way of the Lord is not equal,' unless we come to the same conclusion as the wisest of men, 'I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time *there* for every purpose and for every work.' (Eccles. iii. 17.) 'For thus saith the Lord, Them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.' But we are not left to our own conjectures about the great day of judgment.

"We will come to the plain words of God.

"What saith the Scripture?—'He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.' (Acts xvii. 31.) 'God shall judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.' (Rom. ii. 16.)

'Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: for he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.' (Gal. vi. 7, 8.) St. John describes the proceedings of the Great Day as God revealed them to him thus; 'I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works: and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.' (Rev. xx. 11, 12, 15.)

"The book of life! The Lamb's book of life!

"My Brethren, this is the *only* escape from the lake of fire. Oh! what would the poor conscience-stricken criminal, in his cell, give *now* for a way of escape from the temporal punishment of his crime? Behold! a way of escape is *now* open to you from a far more terrible sentence. *To-morrow* it may be closed!

"It is told of Robert Bruce, king of Scotland, that when his enemies pursued him they took the

king's bloodhounds to aid them in their search. The animals followed the scent of his footsteps from mountain to valley, through woods and ravines, while the king, hearing their cry, fled for his life. Almost in despair, and worn out with fatigue, he sat down in a wood by the side of a little rivulet to rest. Again he heard the cry of the dogs coming nearer and nearer; what must he do? As a last hope he determined to set foot in the water, and walking down the stream to land at some distance on the opposite shore. By this step the bloodhounds lost the scent, and Bruce escaped unhurt. My brethren, the wrath of God followeth hard after you, and will soon overtake you. 'Be sure your sin will find you out.' How shall you escape? Make haste to plunge into that crimson stream which flows from your Saviour's side. So shall you escape; for 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' But if ye believe not, ye shall die in your sins, and 'awake to shame and everlasting contempt;' for they that despise Christ shall be lightly esteemed, and 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' But if through grace you honour Christ, and confess him before men, be assured that he will confess and honour you before his Father and the angels of heaven. And

'what shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour?' He shall be set on the right hand, and shall be clothed in white raiment, and crowned with a royal crown; and shall hear the king say, 'Come, thou blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for thee from the foundation of the world;' unto which may he vouchsafe to bring us all for his infinite mercy. *Amen.*

"'Great God, what I do see and hear!
The end of things created!
Behold the Judge of man appear,
On clouds of glory seated!
Low at his cross, I view the day
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
And thus prepare to meet Him.'"

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*Second Sermon, preached before the Judges at Hertford Assizes, July* 10, 1849.

"'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.'—(Heb. ii. 3.)

"An occasion like the present may well excite in every serious mind feelings of thankfulness and regret. We cannot but be thankful to Almighty God for the continuance of His favours to us as a nation; and more especially at this time, for the protection he affords to our lives and property, by the mild administration of our laws for the punishment of offenders, and the encouragement of those

who are quiet in the land. We cannot but be thankful that on such an occasion God is honoured as the God of truth and equity. The Commission has been opened, but no further business can be done until we have acknowledged the God of nations by an act of public worship, and by hearing His Word. Nor is it only here, but in the courts of justice also, He will be invoked in every oath which is sworn in His name by the jurymen and witnesses. It is the union of Church and State, I apprehend, which secures to us, under God, these national distinctions, along with unnumbered other privileges. Thus we are at least clear from the charge which the Apostle brought against the Corinthians, who were obliged to carry their causes into heathen courts. We have wise men among us (without going out of the Church) who are able to judge between man and man.

"But it must not be concealed that the feelings of grief and shame should exceed those of thankfulness on an occasion like the present. For what have we here? A county assize; a jail delivery; a discovery of a part of the wickedness of the land. Who can hear of one hundred thousand commitments every year in England and Wales, without blushing for his country? What! is this Christian England? These things are a great blot on our professed Christian character as a nation; and the Apostle's charge

against the Corinthians must be laid at our door; for 'there is utterly a fault among you. Ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.' Can any one witness a trial in either court without feelings of fear and trembling for the infirmity of human nature? For we must rest on that part of the evil which is seen and heard. We must trace it to its source—covetousness, drunkenness, excess and debauchery, disobedience to parents and profaning the Lord's Day. Nay, we must go deeper still. We must go to the fountain head whence all evil springs, viz., the heart of man, which is 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?' Crime is not to be reckoned by the cost of police and prisons merely, but by the insult done to God, and the injury to man as an immortal being. True it is, that in this county alone £12,000 is paid for police and prisons every year, while in Middlesex £51,890 was paid for three prisons. These are painful items in the expense of a county or nation, but what are they compared with the real evil,—the sin against the Most High? If David cried, 'Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law;' if Daniel poured out the long confession of his own and his nation's sin, with prayer, and supplication, and fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes; then I say it is neither unmeaning nor unchristian to unite as we

have now done, in one general confession of sin, and one general prayer for pardon and grace. Beloved brethren, I behold you as individuals,—not only as a multitude, but as individual heirs of endless woe or endless joy. And under this feeling I would propose to you the great question in the text—'How shall *we* escape, if we neglect so great salvation?'

"In doing this I propose to shew,—

"I. Why the Gospel is called the Great Salvation.

"II. The fearful danger of its neglect.

"I. *Why the Gospel is called the 'Great Salvation.'* All that God does is great. In little things He is great. His salvation cannot be otherwise than great. It is the salvation of a great God. Hence he always speaks so of it. If it be compared to a supper, it is a '*great* supper' of the great King. If he speaks of it as love, it is 'the great love wherewith he hath loved us.' If he compare it to light, it is 'marvellous light.' If he resemble it to streams of water, it is 'a river.' 'There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.' If it contains forgiveness, it is a great forgiveness; 'pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.' If it embrace a righteousness, it is a great righteousness, 'the righteousness of God.' If it have in it a supply of

all grace to sanctify and to satisfy, it is for 'all the years of famine,' 'for it has pleased the Father that in Him, Christ Jesus, should all fulness dwell.'

"The Saviour is a great Saviour, and the salvation great, because God is great. The greatest works of man are little, and he is little in his greatest works, and after he has finished them 'the wind passeth over them, and they are gone;' but greatness is the element of God, and that which he doeth he doeth for ever. 'Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out.' But there is one feature in particular which makes it worthy to be called 'the great salvation;' namely, the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This appears from the first and second chapters of Hebrews, taken together, 'He who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, by Himself purged our sins, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high!' This is the mystery of godliness which is without controversy great: 'God was manifest in the flesh.' God foresaw man's fall, and, in his everlasting purpose, ordained before the foundation of the world, that his own dear Son should become a man, that he should take the sinner's place, that

man's transgression should be imputed to Him, and thus that he should save His people from their sins. It was a wonderful plan! But the occasion required it, if God was to be just as well as merciful and gracious. So far was it above human thought, that it pleased God for four thousand years to prepare his people to expect the incarnate Saviour, by promises and types, and by prophecies. He was to be the Seed of the woman, and the Seed of Abraham, and the Seed of David. He was to be the true Isaac, the only Son of his Father, whom he would not spare that he might spare us. He was to be the Paschal Lamb, whose flesh was to be consumed in the fire of God's anger; and who, by the shedding of his blood, and by the sprinkling of it upon the consciences of his people, should save them from the destroying angel of His wrath. He was to be the scape-goat on whose head God would lay all the iniquities of his people, and all their transgressions, and all their sins, that he might bear them away into the land where all things are forgotten. He was to be lifted up as the serpent in the wilderness, that every one that is bitten may look upon Him and live. The Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ was also the burden of almost all the prophecies. Which of the prophets did not write of Him? How striking are Isaiah's words, 'Surely He hath borne our griefs,

and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one unto his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

"And after all these preparations were made for the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, when the fulness of time was come, 'God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' His death and resurrection formed the chief subject of his discourse to his disciples and to the multitude. To Nicodemus he spoke plainly: 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is

condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.'

"To the Jews he said: 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' And again: 'I lay down *my life* for the sheep.' And again: 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.' When he was in the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elias, who appeared from Heaven, spake of his decease.

"And now the time was come when all these types, promises, and prophecies must be fulfilled. 'He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' See him deserted by his friends and forsaken by his God. Go to Gethsemane, and hear his thrice-repeated cry, 'Oh my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.' See his bloody sweat. Follow him to the High Priest's palace, and to Pilate's court. So they find no fault in him; yet they do not let him go. See him crowned with thorns; see him dragging his heavy cross up Mount Calvary. See him nailed with great nails to the wood. Then see

the cross lifted up and thrust into the ground. See him numbered with the transgressors. Mark the mid-day darkness all around. Hear his loud and bitter cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Hear his last words, 'It is finished.' 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.' See the Saviour of the world, the Son of God, die. Even the penitent thief spoke the truth when he said, 'This man hath done nothing amiss.' So did the centurion when he declared, 'Truly this was the Son of God.' Proofs of this are not wanting. He is buried honourably; not cast into Golgotha, the Place of a Skull, as malefactors were. There, in the new tomb, he lies for three days, and no longer. 'God did not leave his soul in hell, neither did he suffer his Holy One to see corruption.' He sends his angel the third day to roll away the great stone, and to open the prison doors. Then the living Saviour comes forth free. Not like Lazarus, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes. He leaves them all in the grave, and with them the sins of his people. 'For in that he died, he died unto sin once, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.' Hereby God would show to all the world that the sacrifice for sin is accepted, the surety is sufficient, the sin atoned for, the debt paid to the uttermost farthing, while the red line is drawn across the reckoning—'*the blood*

*of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.'* Such is the great salvation. Pardon!—Peace!—Justification!—Sanctification!—Eternal life!—all purchased by the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and bestowed without money and without price. He hath shut the gates of hell, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Who can contemplate it without exclaiming, 'What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also, freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

"But it is time for us to consider, secondly, *the fearful danger of neglecting this great salvation.* How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? This is the great question—the greatness of the sal-

vation makes the neglect of it so great. Nay, so great that no words can describe it. How shall we escape if we *neglect* it. I wish to draw your attention to the word 'neglect.' Here lies the danger. It is not how shall we escape if we *deny* so great salvation. It is not how shall we escape if we *resist* so great salvation. It is not how shall we escape if we *despise* so great salvation; but how shall we escape if we *neglect* so great salvation? This is the commonest sin, and the most dangerous. What harm can there be, says one, if I do not make quite so much of Christ? Oh, my brethren, let me reason with you! Consider the insult you offer to your God, who provided the 'Great salvation.' Consider the pain you cause to your Saviour who died for you. Consider the despite you do to the Spirit of grace. Bear with me if I should seem to speak a hard saying; but if you neglect, you will offer a greater insult to the majesty of God, than the fallen angels themselves ever did. They have broken God's law, but they have never rejected his redeeming love. 'Jesus took not upon him the nature of angels.' Jesus died not for the fallen spirits. Jesus hath sent no Gospel to *them*. There is no minister, no ambassador to go to *them*, and tell them 'we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God.' Not such sweet sounds ever reached hell. No, they

have broken the law, but they have had no opportunity of rejecting the love of God. Now which is worst? To violate lawful authority is bad; but to reject tender love! worse, a thousand times worse. Consider, also, the injury you do to your own soul. The salvation is so well suited to your particular case; so commensurate with your largest wants. Do you not know that you are guilty, and that you need forgiveness? Where can you find it but in Jesus Christ? Do you not know that you are unrighteous; and want a better righteousness than your own to stand in? Where else can you find it but in Jesus Christ? Do you not know that you are unholy and want renewing? Where else can you find it, but in Jesus Christ? Do you not feel that you are empty, and want some portion to satisfy your hungry soul? Where else can you find it but in Jesus Christ? Turn to Him, and you will be able to say, 'In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. And in Him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.' But if you neglect this salvation, how can you escape.

"There was but one ark for Noah; how could he have escaped if he had neglected it? There was but one Zoar for Lot; how could he have escaped if he had neglected it? There was but one house and one scarlet line for Rahab and his family; how could

they have escaped if they had neglected it? There was but one fiery serpent lifted up in the wilderness; how could they escape who neglected it? How stood the case, when Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness at the bidding and command of God? He met doubtless with variety of reception, or rather rejection. Some there were that openly scoffed at it, and *they perished!*—some there were that preferred their own remedy, and *they perished!*—some there were that expressed much regard and respect for the brazen serpent, but neglected to look, and *they perished!* There were some that really designed to look, but delayed, and *they perished!* And there were some that looked, and as they looked they were healed; they lived! And so it is with this great salvation. There is but one Saviour and one salvation, and that a great one! How can you escape, if you neglect so great salvation? The vessel that conveys you (it may be cheerfully) through the storms of this world, will soon be stranded and lost. Venture to leave it, and step into the life boat. To-morrow it may be too late, and then how shall you escape? Herod heard John the Baptist, and heard him gladly, and did many things; but he neglected. Let us go down to the world of spirits and ask if he escaped? When Felix heard of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, he trembled and

said, 'Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee.' But that season never came. He neglected, and did he escape? When Agrippa heard Paul's defence, he was convinced, and said, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' But he was not altogether, and did he escape? Then how shall *we* escape if we neglect so great salvation?

"It is no matter of course, that every man shall be saved, because Christ died. Without a personal interest in Him,—without a living faith which appropriates Him, and makes him yours,—you cannot escape. What would it profit a dying man to send for the physician in his last extremity, to receive his visits, to describe his symptoms, to be warned of his danger, and, when the medicine is brought, to order it to be laid aside on the shelf that he may look at it? It must be taken, in order that it may cure the patient. Oh, yes, beloved brethren, there is no case so desperate, but the great Physician can give relief. The Gospel is the sovereign remedy. It *has* been the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, and why not now again? It is no fancied picture drawn by your own poet in these lines, it is a reality:—

"'The wretch who once sang wildly, danced, and laughed,
And sucked in dizzy madness with his draught,

Now wept! a silent flood; reversed his ways,
Is sober, meek, benevolent, and prays,
Feeds sparingly, communicates his store,
Abhors the craft he gloried in before,
And he who stole has learnt to steal no more.'

"On the other hand, there is no man so blameless, so moral, so amiable, that he can be saved without a personal interest in Christ. No mere creed, however scriptural; no form of godliness without the power; no church system of doctrine or discipline, however perfect; no bare profession; no sacraments, can take the place of Christ. Christ must be all and in all. Without Christ you are nothing; you are undone. Lay hold on Christ. Thus you will best serve yourself, your country, and your God; and when this world is at an end you will have a kingdom that cannot be moved, and will hear the blessed words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord.'"

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## *Letter to a Layman.*

Feb. 6, 1846.

"My dear G——,—Before you enter upon the important and responsible work you have undertaken every alternate Sunday evening, I am anxious to give you a few words of caution and encouragement. First, I feel very thankful to God, who has made you willing to seek to teach the poor and ignorant, and try to win their souls to Jesus Christ. It is

a high privilege to be permitted to work in the humblest and feeblest manner; and we must never forget we are mere instruments, and must take extreme care we do not exalt ourselves and lower Jesus Christ. 'He must increase, but I must decrease,' John iii. 30. Satan is never at a loss to put temptation in our way; and he is especially busy in trying to puff us up with spiritual pride. I can never forget what an affecting instance we have had of this in poor ——. I well remember him saying to me one day, 'I cannot get away from that word eternity. It makes me long to save souls.' His zeal was very great, he seemed a child of God; but Satan took great occasion to overturn him, and led him to a fearful condition. It seems to say, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' A friend of mine told me lately the words of a pious lady,—'I remember, the first time I was called to pray in public, I felt so deeply the responsibility, and yet Satan struggled so hard to puff me up, that I was obliged to continue on my knees a long time before I could get the victory over him.' If he can only succeed in making us think highly of ourselves, he has succeeded in spoiling our work. We must never forget that neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase,' 1 Cor. iii. 7. Daily ex-

perience stirs up the corruption of my heart, and I am not a little surprised at the discoveries it makes of the deep and desperate wickedness which lurks therein. But even these very discoveries are most useful, if they endear Christ to us at all, and lead us to rely more simply on Him for righteousness and strength. I have no doubt you will daily find the truth of these remarks; and very thankful shall I be, if these few lines should lead you to a more constant searching of your own heart, and spirit, and motives, and prayerful watchfulness against any root of bitterness which might spring up and trouble you. I shall not cease to pray for you, that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, Col. i. 9—13. Let nothing I have written discourage you at all, but rather lead you to distrust yourself more entirely; and rely on infinite love, wisdom, and power, and it will be well. That God may bless you, and make you a blessing, is the earnest prayer of

"Your affectionate and faithful friend,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

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### *To a Parishioner.*

"Wendover, August 4th, 1847.

"DEAR MRS. ——,—I have been pleased to hear that —— is improving, by God's blessing on the change of air. I trust also by this time that

you begin to derive benefit, although I should fear you may find the Isle of Wight too hot for you. Still, my dear friend, fear not; the Lord, who numbers even the hairs of our head, orders all the steps of his people. I am sure you will feel glad if —— should return strong; and no doubt you will have cause to tell of the loving kindness of the Lord towards you both, on returning.

"I wish above all things, that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospereth. How often, as in the case of Gaius, the soul prospers most when the body prospers least. You will be pleased to hear that Mrs. G—— was at the Infant School lecture on Sunday last. I called on Saturday, and entreated her to come. I shall be pleased to hear from you, if you feel equal to writing. I trust you will prolong your stay. I have no doubt you enjoy Bonar on Leviticus. 'The Gospel according to Moses' is very precious when opened and applied by the Holy Spirit. How rich many of the promises of the Old Testament are. Deut. xxviii. 12, first struck me powerfully yesterday. The Lord fulfil it to us. Your district is much as usual. Pray for me and the Lord's people, and his work in this place.

"And believe me, your faithful friend and Pastor,

"SPENCER THORNTON.

"Numbers vi. 24 to end, *for you.*

"Ps. cxxxvii. 8; Phil. i. 6, *for* ——.

### *To the Same.*

"Wendover, Aug. 3, 1848.

DEAR MRS. P——,—A multitude of business has prevented me from writing to you ere this; but I have often thought of you and ——, and have sought for you the best blessings from the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. We are going on here much as usual.

"I forget if poor C—— died previous to your leaving. He was insensible to any ministrations for the last two or three days. Mrs. —— sinks gradually; I trust she is on 'the Rock,' and that Christ 'is precious' to her. Poor Mrs. —— seems very feeble.

"We had a very full meeting on the Monday after you left, and nearly as large last Tuesday. The subjects were very important. The work of the Spirit, and the coming of Christ—blessed hope! Old —— the gardener attended.

"I gave notice that the meetings would cease during harvest.

"We intend, D.V., to leave London to-morrow week for Brighton, where a letter will find us, addressed to the *Post-office*. We are very busy preparing for our journey. I always grieve to leave my beloved flock. Mr. Champneys will assist Mr. Silver in the charge, and reside in the Vicarage; so that the people will be gainers by my absence. I rejoice

to hear —— is better, and trust she will continue to gain strength.

"And now I commend you and her to God and the word of his grace. Acts xx. 32.

"Your faithful Pastor,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

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*To a young Believer, aged 22, dying of consumption.*

"Wendover Vicarage, Saturday Evening.

"DEAR ——,—I fully intended calling to-day, to see you and Mrs. G——; but have been prevented.

"I write these few lines to comfort and encourage you not to faint under the mighty hand of God, or be weary of his correction.

"You have seen two lately removed, near your own age, and two more lie sick; but hitherto you are spared amongst us. Be not too anxious, but seek to say 'Thy will be done.'

"Die daily to the world and every creature. Cleave to Christ; He is infinitely desirable. In His presence, and in nothing else, is fulness of joy. Live *in* Him, live *on* Him, live *to* Him, and soon you shall live *with* Him, John xvii. 24.

"Will you give Mrs. G—— Luke xviii. 1—14.

"Believe me your faithful friend and Pastor,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

*To the Same.*

"Saturday Evening.

"My dear ——,—You will receive this little note on the Lord's Day morning. I pray God that you may be in the Spirit, and that He may vouchsafe to you some gracious views of himself, and of the riches of his grace and glory in Christ Jesus. Perhaps your next Sabbath may be spent in Heaven!* May your longings after that blessed place, and your desires to be with your Saviour, who has loved you, increase more and more. Ps. lxiii. 1—4.

"Your weakness and weariness may make you long for a glorified body, which will assist you to wait on the Lord without distraction. Then you will have ceased to sin, and will never again grieve Him whom your soul loveth.

"Fear not, for He hath said 'I am with thee.' Isaiah xliii. 2, 3. "He will give you dying grace for a dying hour, and will make you more than conqueror through Him that loved you.

"God is 'faithful, who also will do it.' To the love and care of your covenant God and Father, who first loved you and will keep you from falling, and will present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, I would commend you now and ever,

"And remain your faithful and affectionate friend,

"Spencer Thornton.

* She died the following week.

### *To an Invalid.*

"The day before Good Friday; Vicarage, April 1, 1847.

"DEAR ——,—Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied to you.' I hear of your afflictions and patience; and pray God that as your tribulations abound, so all your consolatons may abound by Christ Jesus.

"I have been considering, during this solemn week, the example of Christ.

"1st In the object of his life—God's glory.

"2nd. In the Rule of his life—God's word.

"3rdly. In his intercourse with the world.

"4thly. In his condition in life.

"5thly. In his joys.

"6thly. In his sorrows.

"7thly. In his death.

"I will send you a few notes on *His joys and sorrows*. You are called to experience the latter. The Lord grant you to experience the fulness of the former also, is the prayer of your very affectionate Pastor,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

Ps. xlii. 5, 11; xliii. 5.

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### *To the Same.*

"Vicarage, Feb. 26, 1848.

"DEAR ——,—Instead of a visit I send you a little note. Having been a prisoner myself, I can better feel for you. But what is mine compared with

the sympathy of Jesus, Heb. iv. 15. My text to-morrow morning is Ps. xxiii. 5, 'Thou anointest my head with oil.'

"It is an allusion to the Eastern custom, where the host pours sweet oil on the head of his guests. See Luke vii. 46. It is an emblem of the joy and beauty which the Holy Spirit gives to all in whom he dwells, setting them apart for the service of their God. See Levit. xiv. 28, 29.

"This oil makes them priests in the Lord's Tabernacle, whence they never go out. Levit. x. 7.

"This is ours through union with Jesus, whom the Holy Ghost anointed with the oil of gladness. Ps. xlv. 7. He is *Messiah, Christ;* and we are called after this name, *Christians.* Cheer up then, dear suffering child of God. Thou hast but the beginning of joy here, like the labourer's rest at *noon* compared with the rest of *night.* Hereafter thou wilt have full and final joy.

"The Lord be with you to-day, and to-morrow, and always.

"So prays your affectionate friend and Pastor,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

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*To the same.*

"The week before Passion Week; Vicarage, April 15, 1848.

"DEAR ——,—The subject which will occupy

the minds of thousands of God's dear children next week, has been often very precious to you. The sufferings of Christ in the flesh and spirit! it is the wonder of angels, and the glory of God. The Lord has led me to Isaiah xlv. 8, 9, for to-morrow.

"What condescension that the Lord makes a comparison with men's ways, in order to magnify the riches of his grace the more. I propose to establish the *truth*, by showing the superiority of God's ways.

First, in delaying to punish sin, and suffering it to rise to a great height. This he did to show the sinfulness of sin, and magnify the riches of his grace.

"Secondly, in punishing sin, yet sparing the sinner. Hereby he made his justice and mercy to appear. Rom. iii. 26; Ps. lxxxv. 10.

"Thirdly, in sanctifying all who believe.

"Fourthly, in bringing many sons unto glory.

"Fifthly, in casting down impenitent and unbelieving sinners into hell.

"Improve the subject, as—

"1st. A motive to sinners to come to Jesus; see ver. 5, 6.

"2ndly. A motive to saints to trust a faithful God.

"Pray for me, that the Holy Spirit may anoint

me, and make the word mighty and powerful, and that He may melt the hardest heart at the foot of the cross. May grace, mercy, and peace, be with you. May you have fellowship with your suffering Saviour.

"I am your faithful friend in Christ Jesus,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

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*To the Same.*

"The day after Good Friday; Saturday, April 22, 1848.

"DEAR ——,—Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied unto you from God the Father, through Jesus Christ, who died and is alive again. I thought of you when I was studying 1 Pet. iii. 18. yesterday. Even 'Christ ALSO suffered.'

"'God had one Son without sin, but none without suffering.'

"In looking at Christ's sufferings, let us consider,

"First, What our sins procured to Him.

"Secondly, What his sufferings procured to us.

"To endure for us—To bear our guilt—How great!

"Oh unutterable exchange!

"The *sinless* is condemned—the *guilty* goes free.

"The *blessed* bears the curse—the *cursed* bears the blessing.

"The *life* dies—the *dead* live.

"The GLORY bears the shame—the *shame* bears the glory.

"'To bring us unto God;' he satisfies all the demands of justice by his death, and all the demands of a poor sinner.

"'To bring us *unto* God.'

"Nearness to God is the glory of Angels. Matt. xviii. 10. Glory of Jesus. Ps. xvi. 11. Glory of Saints. John xvii. 24. Rev. xxii. 4.

"Have you considered that Christ did not come *expressly* to set us an example; but he has done it in his way to death. See 1 Pet. ii. iii.

"Peter's mind loved to dwell on sufferings. Sixteen times in this Epistle he speaks of Christ's and his people's sufferings.

"Cheer up, then, dear ——. Let that one word '*also*' revive you. You are treading in the Saviour's path.

"The Lord be with your spirit.

"Ever yours in the Lord,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

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### *To the Same.*

"Wendover, July 16.

"DEAR ——,—I write a few lines instead of speaking to you to-day. I am going to induct a man of God into his living at ——. You will rejoice to

hear of a man of God coming there. It is a sad, desolate wilderness. May God cause it to rejoice and blossom as a rose. How sweet Ps. cxix. is for you. Every verse is blessed. How sad the complaint, ver. 25 and 28; but the prayer in both is the remedy.

"What a wonder-working God we have to do with. Eternity will be too short to praise him. Meantime he is ripening you for glory, and he will perfect that which concerneth you. He is faithful and true to everlasting.

"'His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour,
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.'

"Zech. ii. 10 is a sweet verse for you. That is our chapter this evening, at the Prayer Union Meeting; will you tell your mother?

"I am yours very truly in Christ Jesus,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

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*To the Same.*

"Vicarage, April 29, 1848.

"DEAR ——,—'Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Jesus Christ, be with you.'

"My text is Ps. xvii. 15, last clause.

"What a prospect! I shall speak of:—

"1st. The believer's awaking in Christ's likeness.

"2nd. The satisfaction he will there enjoy.

"1st. *The believer's waking.* 'I shall awake,' &c.

Death is a sleep, Deut. xxxi. 16; John xi. 11; Acts vii. 60. It is like sleep in that it is *easy, natural, refreshing,* and *short.* From it they shall awake.

"2nd. *The manner of his waking,* that is after Christ's likeness. *There will be a perfect likeness in body.* The dead in Christ shall rise first, 1 Cor. xv. 42, 48, 49. The living saints next, 1 Thess. iv. 17. Phil. iii. 21, compared with Rom. viii. 20. What a change! *There will be a perfect likeness in soul.* Who can realize this? There shall be no more sin. Now there is a constant struggle with sin; not so then. The understanding, memory, affections, will be perfectly renewed after the image of Jesus. The sight of Jesus will do it. See 1 John iii. 2.

"'One sight of Jesus as he is,
Will strike all sin for ever dead.'

"What must it be to have a glimpse of Him! It will not, however, be a *glimpse,* but a *gaze.* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

"2. The believer's satisfaction—'I shall be *satisfied.*'

"The believer *now* is satisfied with *God,* but not with *himself;—then* it shall be otherwise.

"The likeness of God formed in the soul will satisfy. David in Ps. xxvii. 4, prayed for this.

"What a motive is here to patient endurance of suffering. See Job xix.

"How sweet the prospect is! How delightful the hope of this glory!

"Your ever affectionate Pastor,

"S. THORNTON."

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*To the Same.*

"Vicarage, March 18.

"DEAR ——,—Mercy and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. I hope you are still growing deeper into Jesus, as you have daily fresh views of yourself. He is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' We can never exhaust his fulness. My text to-morrow is, Ps. xix. 12, 'Who can understand his errors,' &c. What a question! What a prayer!

"1st. *Who can understand their nature?* Errors seem chiefly described in Levit. iv. and v. 14 to the end. I think they are the same as the sins of ignorance mentioned there, *i. e.* sins of inadvertence; things done through ignorance or haste.

"*Who can understand their number?* See Ps. xl. 12. Our thoughts run as swift as time; as fast as the moments. How many are our omissions of duty and miscarriages *in* duty!

"*Who can understand their sinfulness?* An old writer says of a sin of ignorance:

> 'It is a hideous mist that wets amain,
> Though it appears not in the form of rain.'

"II. Look at the prayer suggested, 'Cleanse thou me,' &c. All this shows our absolute need of Christ.

"'Cleanse thou me' includes washing from sin's *guilt*, and also from its *power*. *Cleanse thou me from its guilt*. Here is the blood, Lev. iv. v. There is only one sacrifice permitted without blood, viz., the *flour burnt*, v. 11. Mark, it is added nine times in two chapters and a half, 'And *it shall be forgiven him*.' If the pardon was so full in this case, what must the blood of Jesus Christ procure! 1 John i. 7—11; also ii. 2.

"*Cleanse thou me from its power*. So the leper was cleansed with *oil*. Thus does the new-born soul sigh to be free from the guilt and power of sin. This makes the thought of death and heaven sweet. 'No more sin!' Hence learn—

"1st. Examine yourself often. Most men live without thought. Self-examination is the way to discern one's faults.

"2nd. See the infinite value of Jesus. 'Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.' See what a High Priest we have, Heb. v. 2. He is our morning and evening Lamb. He is our sin-offering for every sin. He is the scapegoat for all sin.

"Pray that God will convince of sin, and lead to Jesus to-morrow.

"Please to tell ——— that I sent the money yesterday.

"Believe me yours ever,

"S. THORNTON."

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*To a District Visitor.*

"Monday, Feb. 1841.

"DEAR ———I know your disappointment at losing the 'Shield of faith,'* but you will no doubt see that it is the Lord. Faith will see that he doeth all things well. I will send you a short outline of the way I treated the subject yesterday; and may the good Spirit himself discover to you, and furnish to you, this 'shield of faith.' I hope you will spare yourself now. Do not think about your district to-day. I shall visit some of the sick in York Buildings to-day; and if I find I have time, will call upon you to take your Collecting Deposit Book.

"May this little sickness be what Baxter calls 'healthful.' The soul often thrives best in affliction. God thus *deepens* the work which is begun in health.

"Believe me ever your faithful friend and Minister,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

* Alluding to a Course of Sermons on Eph. vi. 13—17.

*To Rev. R. R. on the Death of his Father.*

"Berry Hill, Maidenhead, Oct. 1846.

"My dear Friend,—I am much concerned and grieved by the tidings I have just heard. I know not how to write to you, except to remind you of those sweet words,—'It is the Lord!' 'He hath done all things well.' I hope you arrived in time to see your poor father alive. I knelt down and prayed for him, that if still living, the Lord would have mercy on him, and give him fully to apprehend Christ by faith. I long to hear something from you, if you have a heart and time to write. I fully intended to visit your dear parent, but heavy rain came on, and my time was too short. I trust the Lord the Spirit visited him, and has granted him some dying grace, and you some living hope.

"I send you 'Let Him Trust in the Name of the Lord;' 'Thou wilt keep Him in perfect Peace,' &c. And now, dear friend, 'Abide in Him.' 'The Lord liveth,' and 'who shall separate us from the love of Christ.'

"I hear with grief and pain of E. K.'s death at Scrub Wood. Have you any hope of him? Poor fellow! He was very careless.

"Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, is the prayer of your very affectionate friend,

"S. T."

The following extract gives an account of an interview he had with a sick person in London at the request of a friend :—

"Wendover, Sept. 6, 1847.

"I saw Mr. O— yesterday. As I stood at the foot of the stairs, waiting till the maid had taken up my card, I lifted up my heart that the Lord would incline him to see me. I heard him say, 'Tell Mr. Thornton I am too unwell to see any one;' but he called after me, and said, 'Shew him up.' He received me very kindly, and said, 'You are related to the Thorntons of Clapham?' This was an introduction. We soon got upon the great subject, and I took his Bible from the shelf, and read Eph. ii. and Ps. xli. Just as I was closing the book Mr. W. jun. came in, and we all prayed together. I trust it was not in vain. There was a mixture in his expressions, but a professed renunciation of self-righteousness. I left him 'the Gospel of the Grace of God,' and promised to call again if I had an hour to spare."

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*To a young friend at Oxford.*

"Wendover, May 8, 1843.

"I often think of you, and my heart ascends in earnest desire for you that the God of all grace would keep you from all evil. 'God is faithful who

hath promised.' I remember well how thankful I was to feel the restraining power of God's grace when the restraints of home were thrown off, and I was tempted to say, 'I am my own master now.' God's Spirit whispered, '*Ye are not your own.*' Now your principles will be put to the proof. Never forget Prov. iii. 5—7. Make your Bible your counsellor. Read it first and last every day, and pray earnestly, so you shall not fall. Be humble and holy, and you will thus be happy and useful. God bless you, is the prayer of your affectionate friend,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

"P. S.—I cannot forbear to add, that last week I met a young man who has left College in distress and under conviction. He almost despairs. A long course of carelessness and sin has brought him to this. 'Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.'"

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*To the same.*

"Wendover, June 6, 1843.

"Your letter gave me much pleasure. There was only one thing that made me doubtful. I mean, when you say that you hear P. and N. I strongly advise you to be careful.... The tendency of all

error is downward. And if we tamper or trifle with it, we may provoke God to take from us the Spirit of truth. You are just now in very slippery places. 'Watch and pray.' Beware of novelties. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. The saving truths of the Gospel are as old and as true as the Bible, and these are the only safe guides of the soul.... There is much that is false and deceitful in appearances. Things sound well, but you cannot get any purer light than dear Mr. Marks has all along set forth. I feel very much for you. Persevere and hold on to the end. 'Fight the good fight of faith.' 'Flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.' (2 Tim. ii. 22.) The Epistles to Timothy and Titus you should carefully and prayerfully study."

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*To the same.*

"Berry Hill, Maidenhead, August 8, 1845.

"You seem to be enjoying yourself, and, I trust, profiting. It reminds me of by-gone days. What happy Long Vacations * I have passed! How sweet the retrospect! But this is nothing compared with the glory that shall be revealed. Oh, how great is

* Mr. Thornton spent his Long Vacations in visiting the Lakes of Cumberland, a tour through Switzerland, and in Devonshire.

God's grace to us, when we see so many in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. Enemies in their minds by wicked works. We also are enjoying our holydays greatly. I went into Shropshire to visit an old friend, who was the gayest of the gay at Cambridge. But now, what hath God wrought! We met about ten or twelve, some of the excellent of the earth. Three days we spent together. They were like the days of heaven upon earth—sweet foretastes of that better land."

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*To the same.*

"Wendover, March 30, 1848.

"I shall ever feel a deep interest in your welfare, and trust the friendship begun on earth may be cemented in heaven. I am delighted with the account of your Cottage Lectures. I am sure the poor value them extremely."

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*To the same, on the Illness of his Father.*

"....I trust God will endue him with patience from day to day, and will sanctify all to his present and eternal profit. How many are the Scripture texts of comfort and direction under affliction! 'I know, O Lord, that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled.' It is a great mercy to

know that 'whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.' .... O, how little we prize our blessings till we lose them. Mr. M'Neile says, 'Friendship is indeed a bird of Paradise. While it rests with us in sweet soft peace, we are ignorant of half its charms. It is when it wings its flight towards Heaven to leave us, that we behold its expanding beauties—the loveliness of the plumage that is no more!' So it is of our parents. What a duty we owe them!

"Doubtless there is a needs-be for your present trial. May it yield the fruits of humiliation, love, conviction, and comfort, which it is intended to yield and calculated for, if duly applied by the Spirit of God.... Prayer, meditation, and temptation (trial), make a minister. This is sent to humble and prove, to make and keep you low, at this time when you are beginning your ministry."

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*To a young Clergyman.*

"Wendover, Dec., 1843.

"My dear F——,—I do most truly sympathise with you in your present serious and painful illness. I know what a great trial it must be to your active and serious mind to see, or to think you see, the people flocking to hear the Gospel, and not to be able to deliver it to them. But God forbid you

should harbour the thought that He deals hardly with you, in any thing that he does. Remember who has said, Rom. viii. 28. St. Peter dared not pray against trials, but said, 'the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory, *after ye have suffered awhile,* make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.' 2 Pet. v. 10. *We young ministers* need chastisement more than all other men; and especially when we begin our work. We can ill bear prosperity; we must be nothing, and learn that God can carry on His work, though He bury His workmen. Remember, my dear E——, the answer to Paul under the thorn in the flesh, 2 Cor xii. 7—10, 'My grace is sufficient for thee,' was a greater blessing than the removal of the thorn. My prayers shall not be wanting for you, that God may be glorified in your body, whether it be by doing, and especially by *suffering* His will; and oh how much easier is the former than the latter! We have little idea of our own weakness and wickedness, till we are made to see ourselves. I well remember being laid aside soon after coming here; it was hard to flesh and blood, but grace made it good. The hour of sickness and trial has its immense uses, if it lead us into the chamber of our own hearts, if it discover to us our natural fretfulness, and lead us again to the fountain opened for

sin and uncleanness. Thus '*Prayer, Meditation, and Temptation,* make a Minister.'

"I commend to you Job iv. 3—5; Ps. xli.; 2 Cor. i. 3—7."

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*On Reading the Bible.*

"First. *Reading the Bible.* The Bible means *The Book.* It is indeed *The* Book. The one, the only Book for man as an immortal creature, a lost sinner. It contains God's thoughts in God's words. 'It has God for its author, salvation for its object, and truth without any mixture of error for its contents.' 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine,' &c.; and 'Thus saith the Lord,' is as it were stamped on every page. Let no day pass without reading it.

"'But perhaps you say you have not time. Not time to read the Bible! Not time to read the Book of God! a Book written by God *to* you and *for* you and *of* you! The only Book which san make you wise unto salvation! Have you time to eat, and drink, and sleep, and have not time to read the Bible? Have you time to read letters from your friends, and no time to read letters from God? time to read the Newspapers, and no time to read the

Bible? You *must* find time, and if in no other way, by redeeming it from sleep, business, recreation, conversation and other pursuits. How much time would it take daily to read with serious attention a whole chapter?'

"Sometimes I have been asked the question, What is the best way of reading the Bible? It is not easy to give one rule for all; but *love to the Bible* will be the best rule. You have often heard of a learned infidel, who tried to persuade a poor woman that the Bible was a bad book. After a good deal of conversation, she said, 'Well, sir, I see you are a learned man, and I am a poor ignorant woman; but one thing you never can persuade me, that honey is not sweet. I know it is, because I have tasted it; even so do I know the Bible to be sweet, for I have tasted it.' Yes, my beloved people, *taste* the word of God, and you will find it sweet. Read it till you do find it so. Love to read it, and you will be sure to read it to profit. The following rules, however, may be useful to you.

"1. Read the Bible *daily*. A fixed time is best.

"2. Read the *whole* Bible. Some read it through every year.

"3. Read the Bible *well*. Understand what you read.

"4. Read the Bible in *faith*. Believe *every word*.

"5. Read the Bible *with prayer*. Pray over all you read.

"6. Read the Bible *with self-examination*. Ask yourself, Have I a Bible character? Is my mind a Bible mind? My heart a Bible heart? My life a Bible life? Do others see the fruit and effect of my study of the Scriptures, in my likeness to the Scriptures? Am I a living, speaking, acting Bible?

"The solemn season through which we have just passed, reminds us of the great love of God towards us, and teaches us by the noblest example to love *one another*, even as God for Christ's sake hath loved us. Every instance of kindness and liberality which the rich show to the poor, and the poor to one another, is cheering; and I would exhort you to 'abound more and more.' Where love is it will never want opportunities of doing good at home and abroad. It is an expansive principle; it stops at nothing. There are *a few* who feel the constraining love of Christ. They have first given *themselves* to the Lord, and they are never wanting in labours of love to all around them. They are ready to every good work. This is the sweet spirit which the religion of Jesus breathes. If all would cultivate it one towards another, what a happy parish ours would be!"

### *To his Mother, after his Ordination.*

"Watton, 1837.

"I thought much yesterday and Saturday how great a debt of gratitude I owe to God that He has taught me, through *your* instrumentality, from a child to know the Holy Scriptures, and latterly to choose the narrow way, and has thus gradually opened the way for my entering the sacred office, and in such a parish, under such a Rector.

"I trust you will forgive my want of filial love and feeling toward you which I often find wounding my heart, and which you must, I am sure, see developed in my life on frequent occasions. I trust you will forgive me, as God for Christ's sake has forgiven me.

"I desire to come here in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, and pray that I may teach, by preaching and by my life, the whole counsel of God.

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### *To his Mother, on his Birthday*

"Wendover, Oct. 10, 1842.

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,—I am anxious you should receive this on my birthday. I shall have your prayers and praises too! Twenty-nine years of mercies and of sins! Bless the Lord, O my soul!

I thank God for giving me such a mother, to whom I owe, under God, all my present mercies, experiences, and hopes. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. I often look back and see nothing but mercies all the way the Lord has led me these twenty-nine years. Oh! for more gratitude, more devotedness.

"How deep in debt do all God's mercies find us, and how much deeper do they leave us. Indeed we may say with Jacob, 'I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies.'"

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*To a Young Person entering the University of Cambridge.*

"Wendover, Oct. 26, 1847.

"DEAR SIR,—I have just got a note from your cousin, the Rev. G. H——, requesting me to send you an introduction to Professor Scholefield and Mr. Carus, which I have great pleasure in doing, and trust you will improve their acquaintance to the utmost. Let me intreat you, on your entrance at this important period, to remember these three words—'Shew your colours,' with 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Praying God to bless your soul and studies, I am, your unknown friend,

"SPENCER THORNTON."

*Letter from one who had been converted through Mr. Thornton's ministry.*

"Wendover, March 18, 1848.

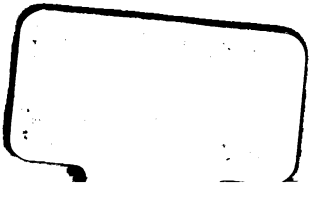
"When we are all summoned to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, may we be able to give an account of some amongst us with joy and not with grief.... I fear you will say I am making too much of the creature. God forbid I should do this. I often feel thankful to remember your kind and needful advice about this. Still I can but feel grateful to one who has, under God, been the means of making known the way of salvation to my soul; my desire is to give God the praise! I cannot say I am going on in my own soul as I could wish. I feel so much of the leprosy of sin clinging to me, that it sometimes overcomes me and tempts me to doubt the love of God. Having so many privileges, I do not use them as I ought. When I would do good, evil is present with me. I long to get rid of these ugly doubts. I am like Peter. God give us more faith. May we be so joined to Christ our Lord, as to become one spirit with him."

*Letter of a young Minister after the death of Mr. Thornton.*

"What a loss to us and his parish; to the Church of Christ, and especially to that part of it to which we belong! What a light he was! how active, how useful, how zealous, how earnest! Always ready to do good, everywhere and anywhere; never consulting his own ease; not sparing himself any trouble. We have seen his zeal, and experienced his kindness. His memory will ever be fresh and dear to me. He took me, an entire stranger, to his home and his heart, simply to do me good. It was a most critical time with me: a time when I stood in special need of a helping hand and tender dealing, and he stretched forth his hand and bore with my infirmities. We cannot but wonder at his being taken away so suddenly, in the midst of so much usefulness; but doubtless his work here below was done, his race run, his battle fought, his crown won; and God can raise up other Thorntons in his stead."

The same friend wrote, on another occasion:

"Well do I remember his coming to my lodgings, on the day I was to be ordained, and commending me in prayer to God, and giving me advice and counsel, as we walked up and down before the Rail-

way Station, waiting for the Train. He was not afraid to point out one's faults.... Do not you remember his active step, how he would come and put us to flight as we sat together after dinner. No sooner did he appear than we caught a little of his activity, and were off to our work.... I never saw one who did so much work in a little time. Method was combined with activity. Another thing that was most apparent in him was, that he ever had his Master's cause at heart. *Wherever he was, whether amongst rich or poor, this was his great object.*"

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